

2022

The News Magazine of Economic Cooperation Organization

Special Edition



# ECO CHRONICLE



## TOURISM IN ECO REGION





**Published by:** Economic Cooperation Organization  
**Patron & Supervision:** Khusrav Noziri, ECO Secretary General  
**Address:** No.1, Golbou Alley, Kamranieh St., Tehran-Iran  
**P.O.Box:** 14155- 6176 Tehran(I.R. Iran)  
**Tel:** (+98-21) 22831733-4 22292066 **Fax:** (+98-21) 22831732  
**Web:** <http://www.eco.int>

The content of this special edition of ECO Chronicle has been provided/approved by the ECO Member States.  
The views expressed in this Chronicle do not necessarily represent the view of the ECO.





# Foreword



It is a great privilege for me to present this Chronicle which is dedicated to the development of tourism in the ECO Region. The release of this special edition before the 4th ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism in Samarkand, Republic of Uzbekistan, is further aimed at marking the significance of tourism and making continued promotion of the sector. Highlighting tourism potential of the ECO Member States, showcasing popular tourism destinations, attractions and other tourism related information makes this Chronicle quite unique and useful for tourism lovers.

Tourism sector contributes directly towards economic activities and poverty reduction, enables socio-economic development and generates more employment and revenues. It also plays a significant role in development through indirect linkage to other sectors via the supply chain. With its huge potential, tourism can be a powerful tool for regional development. Hence tourism occupies a very important place in guiding document of the Organization - ECO Vision 2025 conforming to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and is recognized as one of the four main priority areas of economic agenda of the ECO.

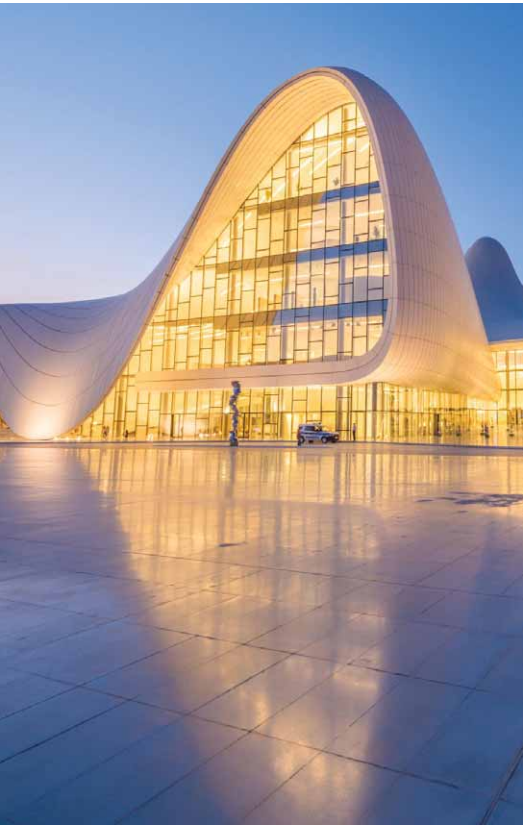
Assuming the current chairmanship of the ECO, the Republic of Uzbekistan declared 2022 as the "Year of Strengthening Connectivity" in the ECO region. This appeared to be a progressive approach and bore the opportunity to collectively recognize the contribution of enhanced regional and international connectivity ensuring comfortable, cheaper accessible and safe travel for the development of the tourism industry throughout the region.

Tourism sector has remained one of the hardest hit industries by the COVID-19 pandemic. As the ECO Member States continue to look forward to coming out of the yoke of the pandemic, improving the tourism potential of the region and discovering some fresh ways and means to attract tourists and most importantly promoting the intra-regional exchange of tourists, the 4th Ministerial Meeting on Tourism can provide an excellent stage for fuelling the patience and spirit of enhancing cooperation and creating synergies among the tourism authorities of the Member States, as well as renewing their commitment towards achieving mutual tourism objectives in the region. Moreover, the event is expected to adopt a "Road Map on Facilitating Accelerated Recovery, Safe and Sustainable Development of Tourism after COVID-19 in the ECO region" as a post-COVID general framework for cooperation among the Member States, ensuring steady recovery and progress in regional tourism.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the valued contributions of all ECO Member States, particularly the Republic of Uzbekistan for the country's enduring support as the current ECO Chair in pursuit of our common agenda as well as accomplishment of the ECO's aims and objectives for the development of regional tourism in 2022.

*Khusrav Noziri*  
*ECO Secretary General*

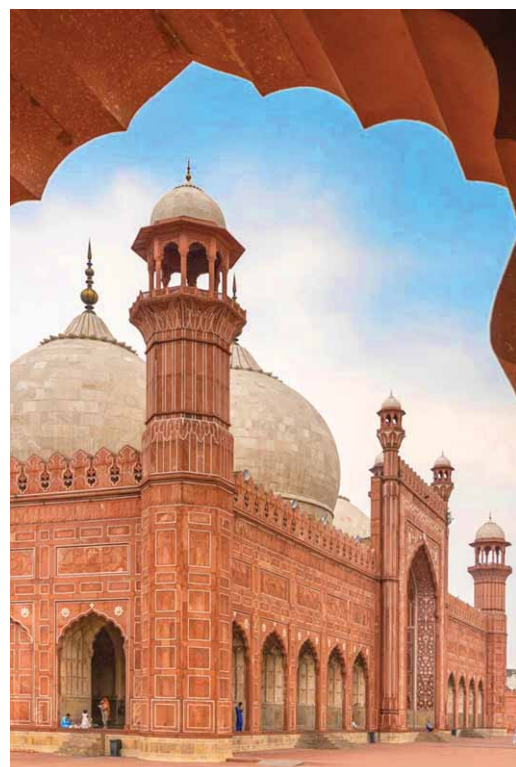




# CONTENTS

<b>Tourism in ECO Region</b>	<b>4-78</b>	.....	<b>16</b>
■ Tourism in Afghanistan	.....4	■ Tourism in Kazakhstan	.....22
■ Tourism in Azerbaijan	.....10	■ Tourism in Kyrgyzstan	.....30
■ Tourism in Iran		■ Tourism in Pakistan	.....38
		■ Tourism in Tajikistan	





.....46	<b>ECO Tourism Capital 74-80</b>
■ Tourism in Türkiye	
.....54	■ ECO Tourism Capital
■ Tourism in Turkmenistan	Dushanbe ECO Tourism Capital 2021
.....62	Sari ECO Tourism Capital 2022
■ Tourism in Uzbekistan	Ardebil ECO Tourism Capital 2023
.....66	.....74



# Tourism in AFGHANISTAN



Afghanistan has a history of more than six thousand years, with many historical sights and attractions, among these are the more than two thousand year old famous Buddha Statues, the tomb of Hazrate Ali (the son in law of Prophet Mohammed p.b.u.h and the fourth caliph of Islam) in Mazar-e Sharif, the beautiful city of Balkh (also known as the Mother City of all Cities), the lakes of Band-e Amir, the deep lapis lazuli blue of the waters are a shocking contrast to the plain colours of the surrounding mountains.

Afghanistan has also been of great strategic importance for invading armies, from Genghis Khan to Alexander the Great. All these armies have left astonishing trails behind, trails that have been forgotten due to decades of war but are yet to be discovered.

## ■ Jami Mosque of Herat

The Great Mosque of Herat or "Jami Masjid of Herat", is a mosque in the city of Herat, in the Herat Province of north-western Afghanistan. It was built by the Churids, (Over 800 years ago) under the rule of Sultan Ghiyath al-Din Muhammad Chori, who laid its foundation in 1200 CE. Later, it was extended several times as Herat changed rulers down the centuries from the Kartids, Timurids, Mughals and then the Uzbeks, all of whom supported the mosque. The fundamental structure of the mosque from the Churid period has been preserved, but parts have been added and modified. The Friday Mosque in Herat was given its present appearance during the 20th century.

Apart from numerous small neighborhood mosques for daily prayer, most communities in the Islamic world have a larger mosque, a congregational mosque for Friday services with a sermon. The Jami Masjid of Herat was not always the largest mosque in Herat; a much larger complex, the Mosque and Madressa of Gawhar Shad, also built by the Timurids, was located in the northern part of the city. However, those architectural monuments were dynamited by officers of the British Indian Army in 1885, to prevent its use as a fortress if a Russian army tried to invade India.



Herat's Jami Mosque is Afghanistan's finest Islamic building, and one of the greatest in Central Asia. A master class in the art of tile mosaic, its bright colours and intricate detailing are an exuberant hymn in praise of Allah. The mosque is laid out in a classical plan of four iwans (barrel-vaulted halls) with arcaded walls around a central courtyard nearly 100m long. Two huge minarets flank the main iwan. Almost every square centimetre is covered in breathtaking mosaic, surrounded by blue bands of Quranic script. Only the simple whitewash of the iwans adds a note of modesty.

The minarets, with their repeated bands of stylised flowers, arabesques and geometric patterns are simply dizzying. Originally it would have had quite a different appearance, as the Ghorids preferred plain brick and stucco decoration. The Timurids restored the mosque in the 15th century and introduced the bright mosaic, but by the early 20th century so much of this had been lost that visitors remarked on the mosque's dullness. The lavish tiling that now covers the mosque is the product of the mosque's tile workshop, an ongoing restoration project since the 1940s. While many of the mosaics are based on Timurid originals, the workshop has also introduced its own designs, colours and calligraphy. This traditional-meets-modern approach has led to the creation of one of the gems of contemporary Islamic abstract expressionism.

### ■ Herat Citadel

Towering over the Old City, the Herat Citadel has watched over Herat's successes and setbacks with its imposing gaze for centuries. The oldest building in Herat, it is believed to stand on the foundations of a fort built by Alexander the Great. It has served as a seat of power, military garrison and prison since its construction until 2005, when the Afghan army presented it to the Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism, opening its doors to outsiders for the first time. The Citadel is built on an artificial mound and stretches 250m east to west. Its 18 towers rise over 30m above street level, with walls 2m thick. A moat once completed the defences, although this was drained in 2003 to lay out a public park in the grounds. The present structure was largely built by Shah Rukh in 1415, after Timur trashed what little Genghis Khan had left standing. At this time, the exterior was covered with the monumental Kufic script of a poem proclaiming the castle's grandeur, 'never to be altered by the tremors of encircling time'. Sadly, most of this tiling has been lost bar a small section on the northwest wall, the so-called 'Timurid Tower'. Time's tremors inevitably did great damage to the Citadel. Repeated conquerors pillaged the Citadel, with locals prizing the valuable roof-beams and baked bricks. The greatest indignity came in 1953 when Herat's army com-

■ Jami Mosque of Herat



mander ordered its complete demolition in order to move his military base on the outskirts of the city. Only the direct intervention of King Zahir Shah halted the destruction. Subsequent neglect caused several sections to collapse. An extensive renovation programme was launched in the 1970s, completed just two months before the Soviet invasion. Visitors enter through the modern western entrance to the Citadel's lower enclosure. Most of this section is currently closed, so you are instead led through an imposing wooden gate and atrium to the upper enclosure. This is the most heavily fortified part of the Citadel and has its own wells, which were used to allow defenders to withstand sieges. Archaeological excavations are still ongoing in the main courtyard. To the left, there is a



small hammam with beautifully painted but damaged walls, showing flowers and peacocks. The biggest attraction is the Citadel's huge curtain wall topped with battlements. These offer tremendous views over Herat, looking south towards Chahar Su, and north to the minarets of the Musalla Complex. It's also possible to make out the last remains of the Old City walls. Leaving by the western gate there is a small museum, which had yet to open at the time of research.



### ■ Shrine of Hazrat Ali

The twin blue domes of the Shrine of Hazrat Ali are one of Afghanistan's most iconic sights, and pilgrims come from across the country to pay their respects at the tomb contained inside. Although non-Muslims are forbidden entry to the shrine building itself, views of the building are to be much enjoyed from the pleasant park that surrounds the complex.

Sultan Baiqara rebuilt the shrine that still stands today. The rich blue tiling that covers every surface of the shrine is modern. The Timurid decoration fell into disrepair and the building was covered with a simple white-wash until the 1860s when it was restored by Sher Ali Khan, the amir swept away by the start of the Second Anglo-Afghan War. Sher Ali Khan's tomb is to the west of the main shrine door. A larger tomb next door is that of the other great scourge of the British, Wazir Akbar Khan, who died three years after driving the British Army out of the country in their disastrous retreat from Kabul in 1842. On the east side of the shrine is a tall minaret-like pigeon tower. The doves in the shrine complex are famous across Afghanistan. Every seventh pigeon is said to contain a spirit, and the site is so holy that if a grey pigeon flies here it turns white within 40 days.





■ Band-e-Amir

### ■ Band-e-Amir

The five lakes of Band-e-Amir (Dam of the King) are hidden in the Koh-e-Baba at an altitude of 2900m (9512ft). The deep-blue waters glitter like jewels, in stark contrast to the dusty mountains. The most accessible of the lakes is Band-e-Haibat - the suitably named Dam of Awe. The lakes' high mineral content gives them their colour.

### ■ Minaret of Jam

Reaching a dizzying height of 65m, the Minaret of Jam stands as a lonely sentinel at

the confluence of the Hari Rud and Jam Rud rivers, the greatest surviving monument of the medieval Ghorid empire. Forgotten by the outside world until the mid-20th century, it remains a holy grail for many travellers to Afghanistan. The first view of the minaret as it looms suddenly and unexpectedly from the folds of the mountains is worth all the rough roads it takes to get there.

The minaret was built in 1194 for Sultan Ghiyasuddin, the grandest of the Ghorid rulers, and marks the highpoint of their fired-brick architecture (Ghiyasuddin also commis-



■ Minaret of Jam





■ Minaret of Jam

sioned Herat's Friday Mosque at this time). Three tapering cylindrical storeys rise from an octagonal base, the whole completely covered in intricate café-au-lait brick decoration. Interlocking chains, polygons and medallions wind delicately around the shaft, interspersed with text from the Quran.

At the neck of the first section, a band of Kufic text spells out Ghiyasuddin's name in glazed turquoise, the only colour on the minaret. Above this are spars from the original wooden scaffold and brick buttresses that would originally have supported a balcony.

The second and third shafts are more restrained in their decoration, surmounted by a final lantern gallery with pinched and pointed arches. Few muezzins have ever had such a stage for their call to prayer.

At the time of its construction, the minaret was the tallest in the world and, until the 20th century, only the Qutb Minar in Delhi was taller. For many years, archaeologists were mystified as to its purpose. Its isolated location begs the same question from every visitor: why here? Given the lack of associated buildings, it was assumed by many to be



■ Wakhan National Park





■ Nuristan National Park

part of a concurrent Central Asian trend for raising single massive towers as statements of political power, possibly marking victory over a pagan populace. Jam is now recognised to be the site of the lost city of Firuzkoh, the Ghorids' capital destroyed by the Mongols.

It's possible to climb the minaret and the views are amazing. A ladder allows you to crawl through a narrow entrance hole to the interior. There are two staircases, winding around each other like a DNA double-helix.

In 2002, the Minaret of Jam became Afghanistan's first UNESCO World Heritage site, simultaneously being placed on the list of World Heritage sites in danger. It's easy to see why. Sat on the confluence of two rivers, erosion of the foundations has been a constant worry, and gabion walls have been built to reinforce the structure. Even so, the minaret still lists at a worrying angle.

### ■ Wakhan District

In 2014 Afghanistan announced that the entire 10,950 km<sup>2</sup> Wakhan District was officially designated as the country's second protected area, Wakhan National Park. The area has become more popular with mountaineers, adventure trekkers and wildlife enthusiasts, with between 100 and 250 people now visiting during the summer hiking

season.

This landscape provides the backdrop for numerous Wildlife Conservation Society.

Wildlife and rangeland surveys, research, and community mobilization initiatives conducted across the region over the past decades. Key results include: Second National Park in Afghanistan, Many of the First Wildlife Surveys in 30 years, First snow leopards tagged in Afghanistan, Discovered New Bird Species.

### ■ Nuristan National Park

Nuristan National Park is a national park in Afghanistan announced by the Government of Afghanistan on 5 June 2020 (coinciding with World Environment Day), making it the third in the country after Band-e Amir National Park and Wakhan National Park. The Park comprises the entire mountainous eastern Province of Nuristan, which borders Pakistan. According to the FAO, a detailed management plan - and "gazettement" - is still forthcoming.

An initial proposal was drafted in 1981, with Nuristan National Park to be formed in what was then Laghman Province and Kunar Province (Nuristan Province was not created, by carving out areas of these two provinces, until July 1988); the report highlighted what were then the "largely undisturbed monsoon-influenced forests", as well as the assemblage of species living therein, including the leopard, snow leopard, Himalayan black bear, and markhor, combined with the traditional way of life of the local communities.

Although a 2003 UNEP report suggested that 52% of forest cover in Nuristan, Laghman, and Nangahar Provinces was lost between 1977 and 2002, and the National Environmental Protection Agency warned a decade later of continuing illegal logging, a 2008 Wildlife Conservation Society report confirmed the continuing presence of the bear and leopard cat, alongside the grey wolf, golden jackal, yellow-throated marten, and crested porcupine, with of a number of other felids reported by interviewees.

# Tourism in AZERBAIJAN



Azerbaijan is a land of dramatic landscapes, ancient culture and 21st-century ambition.

It is located in a fascinating part of the world, between Europe and Asia, so one can expect a cultural and geographical fusion.

The Silk Road has left a legacy here of tolerance, multiculturalism and incredible hospitality. Azerbaijani land shows evidence of the earliest civilizations. The Great Silk Road brought a constant stream of travellers, all leaving traces of their passing. And our history is still being rewritten today, giving Azerbaijan a never-ending supply of fascinating stories.

## ■ Gobustan

The Gobustan State Reserve is located in the eastern part of Azerbaijan, among the Boyukdash, Kichikdash and Jingirdagh Mountains.

The reserve at Gobustan includes an out-

standing collection of more than 6,000 rock engravings bearing testimony to 40,000 years of rock art.

The site also features the remains of inhabited caves, settlements and burials, all reflecting intensive human use by the inhabitants of





■ Gobustan



■ Mud volcanoes

the area between the Upper Palaeolithic and the Middle Ages. The well-known Norwegian explorer and traveller Thor Heyerdahl, who repeatedly visited Azerbaijan, after studying the Gobustan petroglyphs came to a sensational conclusion about the kinship of Norwegians and Azerbaijanis. He discovered the similarity between the ships depicted on the rocks and those used by the Vikings and concluded that the Vikings had migrated to Norway from here.

Tours of the site, which covers an area of 537 hectares, begin at the state-of-the-art Gobustan Museum. Personal,

group or even jeep tours are available.

### ■ Mud volcanoes

Home to the world's greatest concentration of mud volcanoes, the landscape around Baku might be described as messy, bubbling, and sometimes explosive.

The country is thought to have over 350 mud volcanoes and while they never grow to the size of a normal volcano, topping out at around 10 km in diameter and 700 m in height (among the largest mud volcanoes in the world are Boyuk Khanizadagh and Turaghay, both in Azerbaijan), they do occasionally get the chance to show off.

Mud volcanoes occur where tectonic movement allows subterranean gases to escape to the surface. A few of these gas leaks are constantly on fire, shooting small perpetual flames into the air, and some believe that these perpetual

flames are strongly connected to the appearance of Zoroastrianism in Azerbaijan about 2,000 years ago. Located a 1.5-hour drive from Baku, the mud volcanoes at Dashgil near the Gobustan Reserve are the most popular to visit due to their number and size.



■ Ateshgah

### ■ Ateshgah

The fire-worshipping Zoroastrians left their mark at Ateshgah, where the Fire Temple amazes visitors with its spouts of flame. The present temple only dates from the 18th century, though, as the site was adopted by the Hindu merchants trading in nearby Baku.





### ■ Yanardag

Less than a 20-minute drive away from Ateshgah, in Memmedli village a 10-metre wall of flames rises from a hill known as Yanardag. The natural flames were described by Marco Polo in the 13th century and continue to mesmerise those who visit the site.

Today one can learn all about it at the new onsite museum.

### ■ Capital city Baku

Welcome to Baku – a truly contemporary city crisscrossed by history. Here, one can discover a constantly evolving tapestry of life and energy from bazaar to penthouse. From the

modern elegance of the Flame Towers standing proudly above to the medieval UNESCO World Heritage Site at its core, there is something for everyone in this stunning capital.

### ■ Highland Park

This is one of the most popular strolling spots in the city, offering spectacular views and photo opportunities of the Seaside Boulevard, the Baku Bay, Flame Towers and the entire downtown area. The Highland Park Cafe, located here, is a great place to relax and soak up the atmosphere accompanied by calming lounge music. Evenings are the best time to visit as one can enjoy the city's unparalleled

■ Capital city Baku







■ Old city

vistas that magically light up after dark. What's more, it's easy to get here from the Boulevard via a modern funicular taking just four minutes (Tue – Sun, 1 AZN), though many prefer the slow and scenic route on foot up 178 steps.

■ Old city

Wandering through Icherisheher (Old City), a UNESCO World Heritage site whose walls whisper the ancient mysteries of the city, don't be afraid to get lost in its labyrinth of cobbled streets. These may seem jumbled to unfamiliar eyes but in fact they serve historically strategic purposes: these alleyways take you to the main landmarks of the city – the Maiden

Tower, old mosques and hammams, and the Shirvanshahs' Palace. A climb to rooftop cafes and bars rewards couples with panoramic views of the city, the Baku Bay and spellbinding sunsets. Treat yourself to some traditional Azerbaijani cuisine in the restaurants nestled within the Old City. Don't miss peering inside the Maiden Tower, a much-loved symbol of the city and Azerbaijan. It looms dark and enigmatic, looking out to sea from the southern edge of Icherisheher. The origins of the tower are shrouded in mystery – no-one knows for certain when it was built or what for, or even how it acquired its name – Maiden Tower. From an aerial view it resem-



■ Maiden Tower



bles a buta (paisley pattern), a symbolic ornament of Azerbaijan. One theory says it could be a temple of Zoroastrianism, as the buta is a symbol of fire. Later, in the 12th century, it was used as a defensive fortress by the Shirvanshahs, and in 2000, it was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Occupying the highest spot in the Old City, the Shirvanshahs' Palace is the former home of the Shirvanshahs. It was constructed between the 12th–14th centuries and is not only a timeless example of medieval Islamic architecture but also a contemporary museum. A few doors down from here, call into the Museum of Miniature Books (free entrance), which entered the Guinness Book of Records for housing the world's largest collection of miniature books (some 5,600). After this, pause by the nearby monument to Aliagha Vahid, one of Baku's most celebrated poets. If you are not a fan of statues, don't rush, just look closely and you will notice lots of interesting details speaking of his life and works.

### ■ Heydar Aliyev Centre

Designed by the illustrious architect Zaha Hadid, this is one of Baku's most iconic landmarks. Its shape is characterised by its astonishing flowing, curved style, but besides its extraordinary appearance it houses some of the best art curations in the city.

There are four massive floors dedicated to art and cul-



ture alongside full-fledged museum exhibitions.

The Miniatures of Azerbaijan exhibition will take you on a tour through all of our main sightseeing spots, while Pearls of Azerbaijan showcases our country's unique culture and traditions.

### ■ Baku Boulevard

There's no better way to get a feel for Baku's relaxed, Mediterranean atmosphere than by strolling the Boulevard, a sweep of Caspian waterfront promenade that forms a gentle arc past the whole length of the central city area.







The whole sweep offers potentially hours of pleasant strolling with ever-changing views around the bay and back towards different sections of the city. It has national park status and year by year is being extended along the sea.

If you get tired of walking, hop on one of the yellow trains to the Baku Eye, a giant Ferris Wheel with great views of the city and the Caspian, or explore the New Boulevard on two wheels – rent a bike and challenge yourself against the famous Baku winds.

In the evening take a romantic short cruise around the Baku Bay and look back towards all the amazing lights along the waterfront.

### ■ National Carpet Museum

The National Carpet Museum of Azerbaijan is a museum that collects the most exemplary works of contemporary artists and folk artists together with the invaluable examples of carpets and folk art of the national culture and art of the Azerbaijani people.


The Azerbaijan National Carpet Museum was established by the Decree No. 130 of the Council of Ministers of the Azerbaijan SSR dated March 13, 1967. At the time of its creation, it was the only specialized carpet museum in the world.

The preservation of the Azerbaijani carpet as one of the most important components of the national artistic heritage, and its fundamental and thorough study and presentation to the general public was the main purpose of the museum's creation.

The National Carpet Museum of Azerbaijan, which constitutes the material and spiritual heritage of the people of Azerbaijan, is the first, prestigious, specialized museum on carpet art, the largest collection of carpets in terms of the value and importance of the rare carpets in the world's treasure.



# Tourism in IRAN



Tourism in Iran has a very long history. All the historic documents related to the ancient times and before the Islamic conquer, indicate the expansion of cities, roads and residences all over the vast land of Persia. The written documents show that the Greece and the Romans had also traveled to Iran; With an area of more than 1.6 million square kilometers and located inside several different climatic regions, Iran is a vast land to explore. So, it is best to first know its most popular tourist destinations and then plan a detailed tour, visiting every corner on this magnificent and beautiful land.

Tehran, the capital city as well as the most populous one, should certainly be included in any travel plan to Iran. Beside its historic monuments, world-class museums and exiting playgrounds, Tehran has many natural and cultural attractions too. After that, one must try Isfahan, locally known as Nesf-e Jahan (meaning "half of the world"), with its outstanding, world-recognized architecture. Yazd, the first Iranian city to be inscribed in the UNESCO list of world heritage must not be missed. The next tourist destination in the list is Shiraz, which beside the architecture mentioned for Isfahan, is a natural marvel located in the heart of a desert, speaking of which, for those who prefer the beauty and silence of a desert, there is Kerman, with Lut Deserts (Registered in UNESCO) and Shahdad Desert (the hottest spot on Earth) to visit in a trip to Iran.

South of Iran contains many tourist destinations, among them are Bandar Abbas, with beautiful beaches and handicrafts; Khuzestan Province, wherein is Shush, Shushtar, Tchogha Zanbil (all inscribed in UNESCO). However, if one prefers a cold weather with mountainous landscape, there is Kurdistan, Kermanshah and Azerbaijan. For a Mediterranean climate, travel to the North of Iran and enjoy the beauty of nature, the hospitality of people and of course the delicious cuisine. And many other cities and destinations that cannot be mentioned in this article

Now Iran is a touristic country with numerous monuments, sites, artifacts, and natural attractions, which annually attracts about 5 million tourists from around the world. This four season country, with hospitable people, jaw-dropping nature and amazing history, provides the tourists a safe, unforgettable, exiting, yet cheap travel experience.



### ■ Mount Damavand

Mount Damavand is a potentially active stratovolcano, the highest peak in Iran and Western Asia and the highest volcano in Asia and the third highest volcano in the Eastern Hemisphere (after Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount Elbrus), at an elevation of 5,609 meters (18,402 ft.). Damavand has a special place in Persian mythology and folklore. It is near the southern coast of the Caspian Sea, in Mazandaran Province. Mount Damavand is the 12th most prominent peak in the world and the second most prominent in Asia after Mount Everest.

### ■ Naqsh-e Jahan Square

Naqsh-e Jahan Square, is a square situated at the center of Isfahan, Iran. Constructed between 1598 and 1629, it is now an important historical site, and one of UNESCO's World Heritage Sites. Naqsh-e-Jahan Square is a huge rectangular square in Isfahan, Iran, which is surrounded by monuments from Safavid period. Naqsh-e-Jahan Square was built during the reign of Safavid Shah Abbas. In addition to these monuments, there are 200 chambers around the square, in which Isfahan's handicrafts are presented.

### ■ Imam Reza Holy Shrine

Imam Reza's (PBUH) holy shrine is the biggest, most important and prominent reli-

gious center of Iran that consists of the most features of Persian-Islamic architecture that many pilgrims from Iran and all around the world go to this place every year.

Imam Reza's (PBUH) holy body buried in the Hamid Ebn Ghahbe garden beside the grave of Abbasid Khalife Harun with the martyrdom of Imam Reza in 203 AH in Tous and in fact, the Shrine means a square place which consists of the holy monument such as dome, shrine's stone, holy shrine.

### ■ Meymand village

Meymand is a village made of caves close to Shahr-e-Babak in Kerman province. One of the facts that make the cultural landscape of Meymand different is the villagers who still live in the cave houses inherited from their ancestors. The rocky texture of the village made it possible for families to live in cave-like houses for hundreds of years.

In 2005, Meymand was awarded the UNESCO-Greece Melina Mercouri International Prize for the Safeguarding and Management of Cultural Landscapes. On 4 July 2015, the village was added to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list.

### ■ Abyaneh Historic Village

The village is located in Isfahan Province. This village was built at 2222m height- one of the highest residential place in Iran. The vil-

■ Mount Damavand

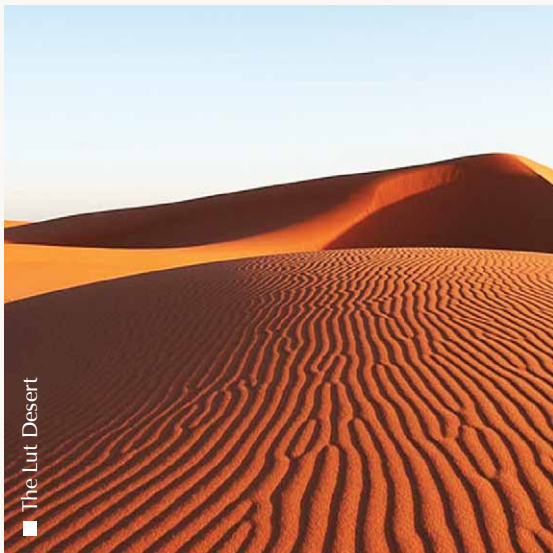




lage has stair way structure and red mud-brick was used as the main construction elements of that so it's known as Iran Ruby. The village history dates back to 1500 years ago and it is considered as one of the oldest residential place on Dasht-e- Kavir Desert margin. This village was a country side for Safavid kings around 400 years ago. Rural life style, special code of dressing, special accent, and unique handicrafts are some of the village peculiar features.

### ■ The Lut Desert

The Lut Desert, is a large salt desert located in the provinces of Kerman and Sistan and Baluchestan, Iran. It is the world's 34th-largest desert, and was included on UNESCO's World Heritage List on July 17, 2016. The sur-

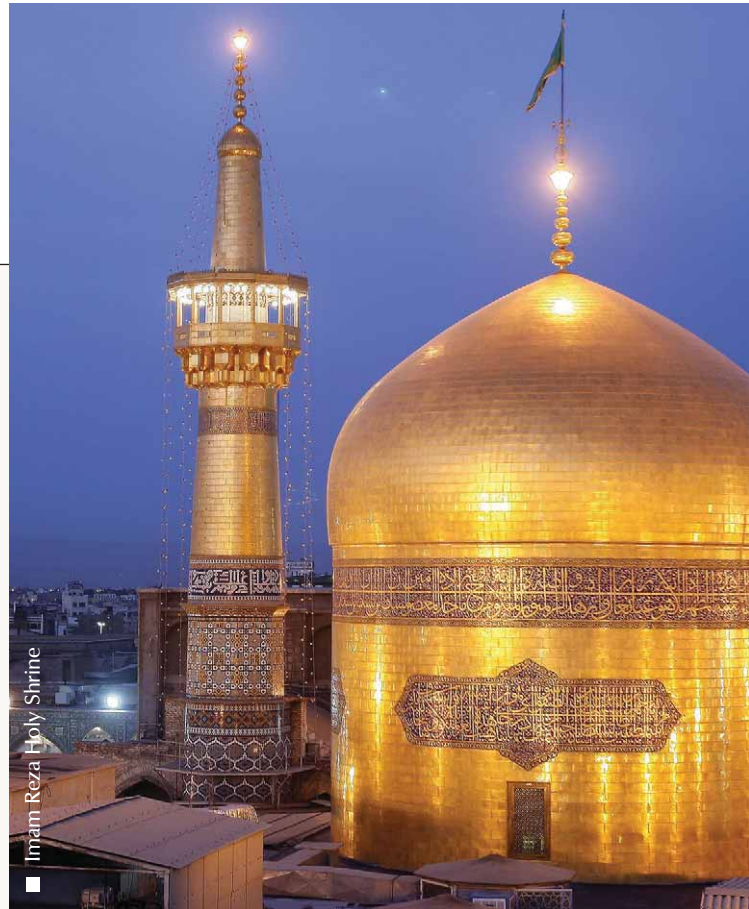


■ The Lut Desert

face of its sand has been measured at temperatures as high as 70.7 °C (159.3 °F), making it one of the world's driest and hottest places.

### ■ Hyrcanian Forests

The Caspian Hyrcanian mixed forests ecoregion are a zone of lush lowland and montane forests covering about 55,000 square kilometers (21,000 sq. mi) adjoining the shores of the Caspian Sea of Iran and part of that of



■ Imam Reza Holy Shrine

Azerbaijan.

The forest is named after the ancient region of Hyrcania. Since 5 July 2019, the Hyrcanian Forests have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

### ■ Qeshm Geopark

Geopark is a vast zone its borders are clearly marked and some remarkable geological phenomena are located in its limited area. This geological area has some worthwhile geological phenomena with various forms due to being located in the beautiful seashore of the Persian Gulf and Hara sea forest.

Qeshm Geopark has a complex of international valuable Geo sites which erosion is the most important cause of their creation. Qeshm Geopark is the first Geopark of Iran and the only Geopark in the Middle East.

### ■ Gahar Lake

Gahar Lake, one of the most beautiful highland lakes of Iran, is located among Oshtorankuh protected zone at the height of 2400 meters above the sea level in Lorestan province. Climbing, fishing with hook, swimming, boating, the possibility of ski on the water, seeing the wildlife, walking around the rivers are the ecotourism attractions of this region.





■ Persepolis

### ■ Persepolis

Persepolis was the ceremonial capital of the Achaemenid Empire (c.550-330 BC). It is situated in the plains of Marvdasht, encircled by southern Zagros Mountains of Iran. Modern day Shiraz is situated 60 kilometers (37 mi) southwest of the ruins of Persepolis. The earliest remains of Persepolis date back to 515 BC. It exemplifies the Achaemenid style of architecture. UNESCO Persepolis a World Heritage Site in 1979. The complex is raised high on a walled platform, with five "palaces" or halls of varying size, and grand entrances.

### ■ Falak-ol-Aflak castle

Falak-ol-Aflak is a castle situated on the top of a large hill with the same name within the city of Khorramabad, the regional capital of Lorestan province, Iran.

This gigantic structure was built during the Sassanid era (224-651). The Khorramabad River runs past the eastern and south-western side of the Falak-ol-Aflak hill providing the fortress some natural protection on those sides. Today, the western and northern sides of the hill are bordered by the residential districts of Khorramabad.



■ Hyrcanian Forests





■ Cultural Landscape of Hawraman



■ **Rasht, City of Gastronomy**

Rasht, the capital city of Gilan province is one of the amazing Must-See cities in this northern part of Iran. Aside from its nature, this City is well-known for its food. It's so famous that UNESCO in 2015 registered it as creative city of gastronomy. It is the only Iranian city that has received such title along with 18 other cities across the world.

■ **Shahr-e Sukhteh**

Shahr-e Sukhteh, is an archaeological site of a sizable Bronze Age urban settlement, asso-

ciated with the Helmand culture. It is located in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, the southeastern part of Iran, on the bank of the Helmand River. It was placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in June 2014.

■ **Cultural Landscape of Hawraman**

Cultural Landscape of Hawraman or Cultural Landscape of Uramanat is the 26th tangible cultural heritage of Iran. This remote and mountainous landscape bears testimony to the traditional culture of the Hawrami people, an agro pastoral Kurdish tribe that has



■ Badab Soort





■ Persian Carpets and Rug

inhabited the region since about 3000 BCE. The property, at the heart of the Zagros Mountains in the provinces of Kurdistan and Kermanshah along the western border of Iran. The villages are unique in terms of architecture, lifestyle, and agricultural methodology. Villages are integrated with nature by incorporating steep-slope agriculture.

### ■ Badab Soort

Badab Soort is a natural site in Mazandaran Province in northern Iran. It comprises a range of stepped travertine terrace formations that have been created over thousands of years as flowing water from two mineral hot springs cooled and deposited carbonate minerals on the mountainside. Badab is a Persian compound of B?d "gas" + ?b "water", translating to "gassed water", referring to the springs' waters being carbonated mineral waters.

### ■ Persian Carpets and Rug

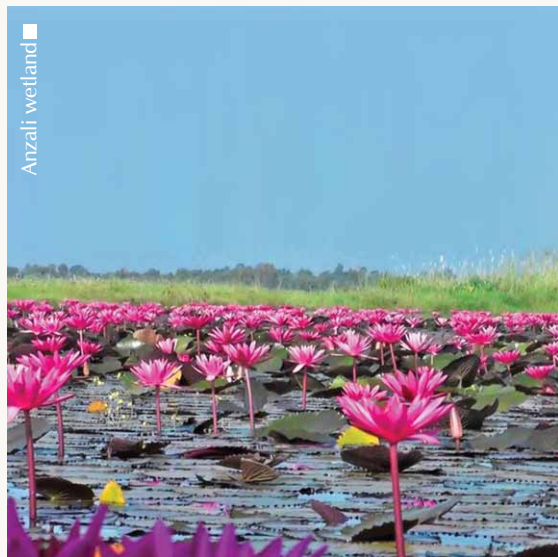
Carpet or rug, defined as a precious textile fluffy ground cloth woven from cotton, wool and silk in some cases, is considered as one of the ancient industries of Iran; and, as per the artifacts recovered from people of the past and what writings of historians, tourists, and fighters implies, weaving different types

of carpets in Iran, as a craft and public, rural, and nomadic art has long been popular and ancestrally incentive.

### ■ The Mangrove forests

The Mangrove forests of Qeshm or Hara forests of Qeshm, are the mangrove forests on the southern coast of Iran, particularly on and near the island of Qeshm in the Persian Gulf. Dominated by the species *Avicennia marina*, known locally as the "hara" or "harra" tree, the forests represent an important ecological resource.

The "Hara Protected Area" on Qeshm and the nearby mainland is a biosphere reserve where commercial use is restricted to fishing (mainly shrimp), tourist boat trips, and limited mangrove cutting for animal feed.



■ Anzali wetland

### ■ Anzali wetland

Being a coastal wetland, Anzali wet land is located in Gilan province on the Caspian coast. This wetland is connected to the Caspian Sea by a ship channel. It should be said that the drainage basins of Anzali Lagoon cover three hundred and seventy-four thousand hectares. Anzali Lagoon was registered as an international wetland and it has been considered as an important bird habitat by the international societies.





# Tourism in KAZAKHSTAN

■ Breathtaking places in Kazakhstan that everyone should visit at least once



We are more than sure that not every traveler, who have traveled around Kazakhstan many times or even those who live here since they were born, knows everything about beauty of the local nature and great variety of these parts. It is enough to say that many people couldn't have named even a few attractions of this unbounded country without mentioning "steppe" or "mountain" used in a very broad sense. And there are lots of places! In order to thoroughly explore and enjoy each of them you will need many years and there is no need to even cross Kazakhstan's border. Here you will find attractions from all six continents of the world: travelling to historical sites and ruins of ancient civilizations, resort vacation with so much fun, driving rally across the deserts and sand dunes, snow skiing and snowboarding at internationally recognized high-altitude resorts or mountain hiking in summer. All these are accompanied by incredibly picturesque landscapes that will make even the most pessimistic tourist savoure their charm. So, in this article we have prepared unique sites in Kazakhstan that looks like they stepped out from the paintings of great artists.





there under the water! As for the wooden trunks overtop, these all became bare and lonely stick out of the water like spars. These trunks are called Guardians. The water is of deep blue color and quite often changes its ton from emerald to azure-blue. However, if you come up closer you will be surprised by its crystal-like pureness, so you can watch the underwater world of the lake through it in its full splendor. In case you enjoy diving then you will definitely see its true value.

### ■ Kolsay Lakes

Kolsay Lakes, like a necklace made out of azure stone, decorate already beautiful northern slopes of majestic Tien Shan Mountains. All in all there are three lakes: Lower, Middle, and Upper Kolsay Lakes. The first lake has the coldest water and it is located in the depth of the gorge that's why it is rather lengthy. The middle one is the most beautiful



### ■ Kaindy Lake

Kaiyndy Lake - It is a wonderful place, as much unique as its historical background. At first sight, it may seem that it is very ancient and appeared as a result of lithosphere plates' movement. But that is not true! Kaindy Lake has proved to be one of the youngest lakes in Kazakhstan made not with human hands. It appeared only 100 years ago, when a huge landslide in 1910 had blocked a gorge. Gradually, a crystal-like pure water filled in a reservoir overflowing a coniferous forest that was growing there. It is surprisingly, but wooden branches are still

ful and big with its incredibly picturesque banks full of flowers; it is surrounded by the peaks forested with coniferous woods. The third lake is the smallest one but it is very cosy – it looks like the lake has hidden from the outer world under the rocks protection

taking care of its crystal-like pure water with reflection of a quaint bushy juniper forest on the water surface. All photos taken next to any of these lakes are perfect and every time different: the water is frequently changing its color from azure to malachite, and then enriching itself with turquoise or even dense blue color.







steppe there is a miracle that people talk so much about? And then they stand still when discover huge mountains appearing out of nowhere covered with thick woods, lakes and a bunch of stones. It is all arranged in such a way so you could enjoy your vacations exactly in the manner you have imagined: there are lakes with pure cool water, resorts with spa and massage rooms - for those who enjoy laying on the beach; there are horse-back riding, climbing famous mountains like Bolektau, Sinyukha, Okjetpes, walks into the forests to look for mushrooms and berries, and many more - for those who like active vacations.

### ■ Bozjyra: a piece of the Moon on Earth

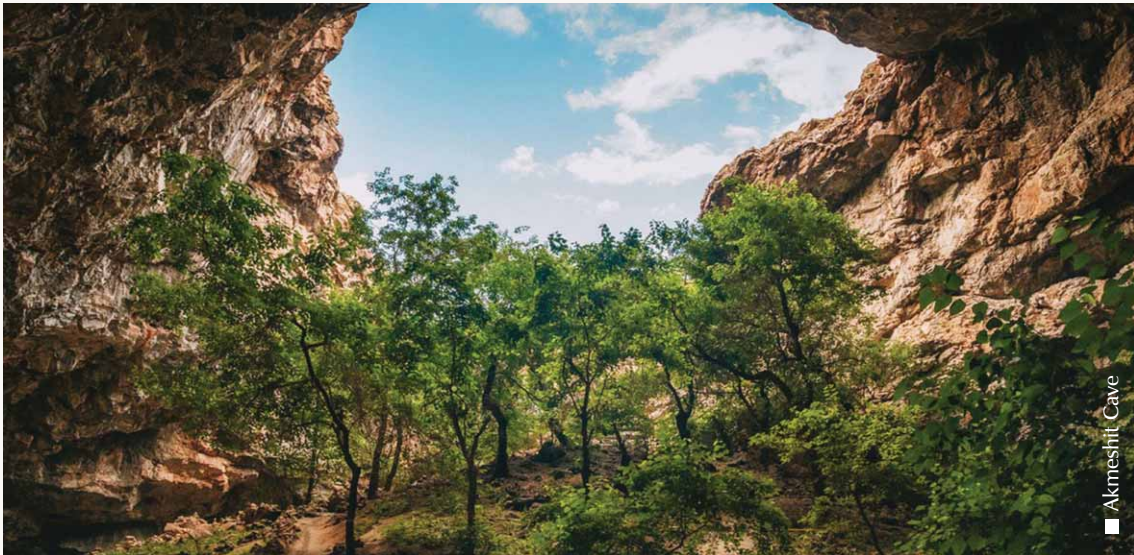
On the Internet you will see lots of images of this place that attracts travelers from all over the world aspiring to touch the local wonder of severe nature. It feels like the nature, in an attempt to apologize for aridity and monotony of the steppe plains, has created this island of incredible beauty and painted it in gentle light-grey, white and beige colours.

Long time ago the Ustyurt Plateau was fully covered with water. The waters of Tethys - an ancient ocean that existed 10 million years ago - were raging there. This is the ocean that had become a progenitor of all seas and oceans of

■ Singing Dune







nowadays. In comparison with the Tethys, its depth, all of them would seem to us as little lakes only. But under the effect of climate and relief changes, the ocean started receding washing out soft limestone with its huge waves. The sun and the wind had accomplished that process by sealing off the yielding rock into fantastic shapes: you can recognize castles, towers, sharp spears, lengthy canyons, and even yurts. A special feature of the place is two strong peaks of limestone (more than 200 meters in height each) that in their shape remind of fangs of a predator. If you have sufficient time and your eyesight is good enough you may find petrified shells at the bottom of

the canyon (of quite interesting shapes); and the luckiest ones will find fragments of prehistoric sharks' bones or even teeth.

#### ■ Rakhmanovskiye Klyuchi Resort (Rakhman Springs Resort)

In the heart of the Altai Mountains, which is almost 200 meters above sea level, there is a stunning view on sacred Belukha Mountain (the highest peak of the Altai Mountains), Arasan Cascade Waterfall, and hot springs under the sky - this is a paradise on the earth, isn't it? Such beauty is worth visiting. But Rakhman Springs Resort attracts all travelers with many more: it is an ideal place not only

■ Rakhmanovskiye Klyuchi Resort





for observing the nature but also for improving human's health. There you may enjoy fantastic views of carefully protected pristine wilderness while, at the same time, improving your health and restoring your vitality resources.

This is a true balneotherapeutic health resort that has been attracting people from all over the world for centuries who aspire to cure their skin and heart diseases, to regulate blood pressure and central nervous system, to weaken impact of seasonal allergy. Moreover, local radon springs are of such a balanced composition that are suitable for almost every one; the variety of springs' water temperature, from 24° and higher, allows to use the most relevant spring for certain type of disease.

After having rest in that area for a long time afterwards you will still remember its beauty and magical peaceful impact of local nature:

majestic Altai cedars, that have been growing on the mountain slopes for hundreds of centuries, enrich the air with delicate pine scent; mountain ranges sparkling with their sugar tops; the purest Rakhmanov Lake shining in the sunlight with its exceptionally smooth surface. What a grace!

### ■ Korgaljyn Lakes

Pink flamingos (and even curly pelicans) in Kazakhstan. This is exotic! You can see it at its best and in natural habitat on the territory of Korgaljyn Nature Reserve.

Apart from those wonderful birds, there are hundreds species of other feathered creatures,



because this is a meeting point for two birds' migration routes: Central Asian and Siberian-South European. During migration period the water area of two interconnected lakes (Korgaljyn and Teniz Lakes) is full of various and rare species of birds that you will never

meet anywhere except vast steppes of our country. This place is may really be considered as the most beautiful and unique in the whole Eurasia. The area is especially beautiful when in April the water surface is covered with a flower carpet of Shrenk tulips marked in the Red Book. One of the surprising features of the region is salty compo-







Aktau colourful mountains and the Singing Dune ■

sition of Teniz Lake water - you can easily lie on your back and read a book without fear of drowning. Korgaljyn Lake, on the contrary, has fresh water with amazing landscape: cane divided the whole lake into separate bay-lakes and each of them has got its own name.

Photos of the region look like being captured in line with the National Geographic project: distinctive, colorfully rich and shining with beauty of undisturbed nature.

#### ■ Aktau colourful mountains and the Singing Dune

A pearl of Altyn-Emel National Park is proved to be amazing Aktau Mountains. Yes, in Kazakh that means "white mountain", but such mixed landscape seems to be of white color only at the distant look. The nearer you approach the brighter their colours are supplemented by sparkling crystals of calcite in various fantastic forms - all these create an incredible image.

When the mountains are lightened up with mild orange-red sunset rays, the photos are

especially magical, so all travelers make photos at that time.

But that's not all! If Aktau is a pearl, then Akkum-Kalkan (the Singing Dune) is a diamond. It is on the list of top 7 new wonders of the nature because it sings! Yes, even a light gust of the wind blowing sand particles off the top makes the Dune to sound like a melody played by organ. And photos at the sunset background are stunning here!

#### ■ Sacred three-headed Altai mountain Belukha

It is a residence of Umay Goddess, a place of cosmic energy, snow-white witness of the past and a warranter of the future - all these epithets were assigned to the highest Altay mountain for a reason. Over many centuries various peoples of Kazakhstan, Russia, Mongolia, and China connected many legends, religious stories, mystery with the Mountain Belukha. Even now, when you look at the snow-white tops, this view makes you shiver and then, all of a





■ Charyn Canyon

sudden, you start seeing images of the past. One of the best views of the mountain is from Yazevoe Lake. You can also reach Kokkol Waterfall to enjoy its raging flows of water falling down from the top and make a photo of distantly sparkling sugar tops of Belukha.

### ■ Charyn Canyon

In the spurs of Tien Shan Mountains there is one of the most amazing creations of the nature - Charyn Canyon formed out of sedimentary rocks aged up to 12 million years! It is considered to be the second lengthy and biggest canyon in the world! It is second only to the Grand Canyon but is capable to com-

pete with it in its beauty. For over thousands of years the wind, the water, and the soil had been forming fantastic stone sculptures, had been carving gorges and caves and had finally created such design that we can enjoy nowadays. Photos are fantastic from any location of the canyon. However, if one goes down to the bottom of the canyon, he or she will get the most impressive photos. Especially, if one manages to catch sunset rays that paint stone sides of Charyn Canyon into scarlet color.

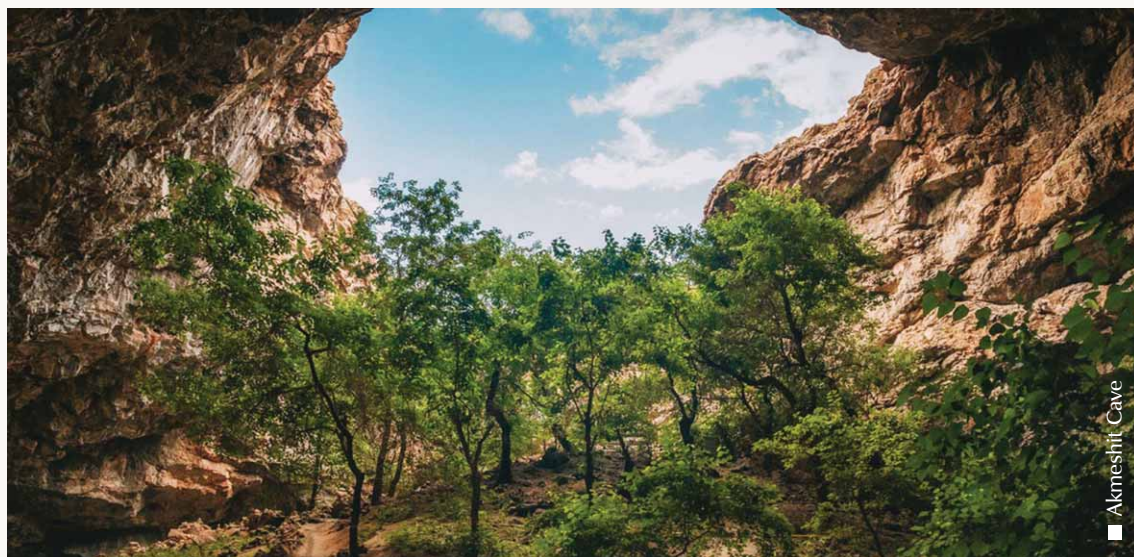
### ■ Shalkodesu Valley

Shalkodesu Valley is a jailau – a summer pasture for livestock. Shepherds drive goats,



■ Shalkodesu Valley





sheep, horses here. Diverse landscape makes this place popular tourist destination. Here people preserve ancient traditions. A chance to see nomadic way of life – that's what attracts travelers to this amazing place.

#### ■ Akmeshit Cave

Akmeshit Cave is a natural miracle of the Turkistan Province and another location worth visiting. The cave has its own microclimate inside it: it is always cool and fresh inside the cave despite the hot weather outside, and there is mulberry bush growing right in the middle of the cave.

#### ■ Aksu-Jabagly Nature Reserve

Aksu-Jabagly Nature Reserve (also spelled as Aksu-Zhabagly) is located in the foothills of the Western Tien Shan mountains. The landscape here is diverse, as is the wildlife. Snow leopards, porcupines, foxes, and wolves are all known to be living here. The variety of plants will also surprise visitors, who will be greeted by St. John's wort, Greig and Kaufman tulips, yarrow, and chamomile. Alpine flowers on the slopes of snow-capped mountains look particularly beautiful!

#### ■ Aktolagai

Aktolagai is a 90 km long mountain range located on the territory of the Bayganin dis-

trict, Aktobe region. This is a geological and geomorphological object of nature reserve fund of national and international significance. The peculiarity of the landscape of these place is the extremely thin cover of the chalk mountains. In places, nature has created whole labyrinths of sheer walls, columns, niches, ledges, terraces, landslide amphitheatres of isolated outliers. Aktolagai is the former bottom of the world ocean. The arguments are shark teeth found, whale spines, fossilized turtle, mollusks, ocean urchins shells found at every step.

The plateau is 90 km long and 5-10 km wide. The highest point Nartobe is 302 meters. It closes with the Caspian lowland along the bank of the Zhem River. It is composed of Cretaceous rocks. The western slope is steep, divided by logs and ravines. The Terisakkan River originates from Aktolagai. To the west is the Tolagaisor Lake. Wormwood, biyurgun, tasbyurgun, gray wormwood, boyalych grow on gray soils and salt marshes.

Locals call Aktolagai an open-air museum, some call this place Alatau. Here you can see many sculptures, such as the lion, Titanic, chess princess, camel, turtle, pyramid, sphinx, chess rook, yurt, pyramids, etc.

■ Akmeshit Cave



# Tourism in KYRGYZSTAN



Kyrgyzstan is an amazing country, the tourist potential of which is huge: the original culture of nomads, interesting traditions, mountains and lakes - a combination that will not leave any traveler indifferent, because breathtaking landscapes are waiting for you literally everywhere. The tourist attractiveness of Kyrgyzstan expands its horizons from year to year.

Kyrgyzstan is a state in Central Asia, located in the western and central part of the Tien Shan mountain system and on the Pamir-Alai. It borders Kazakhstan to the north, Uzbekistan to the west, Tajikistan to the southwest and China to the east and southeast. Mountains are one of the most important tourist destinations both in Kyrgyzstan and in the world, which is developing very rapidly, more than 90 percent of the territory is located at an altitude of more than 1000 m above sea level. The highest mountain peaks after the Himalayas and Pamirs are located here: Victory Peak (7439 m) and Lenin Peak (7134 m) and one of the largest glaciers on earth is Enilchek. More and more attention is being paid to the study of mountain tourism in Kyrgyzstan, due to the fact that this type of tourism activity is very promising for the development of mountain territories. Kyrgyzstan is ideal for those tourists who go on a trip, first of all, for new knowledge about the history and culture of peoples, for impressions of meeting new people. The priority directions in the field of tourism in the Kyrgyz Republic are the following.

- ecologically favorable, untouched and peculiar nature with a natural landscape of mountainous terrain, giving an opportunity for the development of ski tourism, rafting, trekking;
- significant resources for the development of speleotourism. To date, more than three hundred caves have been examined in Kyrgyzstan, each of which is associated with some legend or legend;
- the variety of natural and climatic and historical and cultural resources of the country allows us to form a huge number of variants of a tourist product designed for different costs, duration, degree of comfort, accommodation facilities, age, form of consumption, etc.;
- the richness of Kyrgyz culture with nomadic traditions and the hospitality of the Kyrgyz people.



### ■ Issyk-Kul

Issyk-Kul Lake is undoubtedly the main tourist attraction of Kyrgyzstan. Issyk-Kul is a unique place in every aspect. The lake is located in the center of the extensive Issyk-Kul basin, which lies between the two huge ridges of Kyungey Ala-Too and Terskey Ala-Too, covering almost the entire area. The lake is 1,700 meters above sea level. This makes Issyk-Kul the second largest highland lake in the world, after the Lake Titicaca in South America. The deepest part of the lake is 702 meters making it one of the deepest lakes in the world. The length of the lake's coastline is almost 700 kilometers, which clearly demonstrates its scale. More than 80 rivers from the slopes of the Tien Shan flow into the lake.

The water in Issyk-Kul is salty and it does not freeze even in winter. This is how the lake got its name. Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyz means "hot lake". The lake creates a peculiar marine climate in the valley, which is extremely unusual for highlands and Central Asia in general. For example, the winters here are much milder than in other regions of the country, and in summer, on the contrary, it is not very hot. In summer, the water in Issyk-Kul warms up to 20-25 degrees Celsius and therefore the lake is a favorite swimming place of both Kyrgyz nationals and tourists from other countries. Geographically, the shores of the lake are very different. In the western part, there is a predominately dry and

sandy topography. There is also quite a bit of vegetation and the water level is rather low. In the middle, the lake is expanding sharply, and here are the deepest places of Issyk-Kul. At this point the opposite shore is practically invisible, and the lake is more like a sea. In the eastern part, the lake's water is slightly less salty due to the large number of rivers flowing into the lake. The shores of the lake here are marshy and grassy, with many small islands, bays, etc.

Issyk-Kul's shores are also culturally different. Traditionally, the northern shore of the lake is more visited and developed for tourism due to the flat coastline and sandy beaches. On the northern shore of Issyk-Kul there are many hotels, hostels and guesthouses that host visitors all year round. Especially popular are the city of Cholpon-Ata and the village of Bosteri. However, it should be noted that the northern shore is more suitable for recreation. There are not many geographical attractions, but there are good conditions for relaxation on the shores of the lake. The southern shore of Issyk-Kul is more deserted and calm. There are fewer beaches, but very many different sights untouched by man. This is due to the fact that on the south coast the shore is located close to the giant Terskey Ala-Too Range. Because of this, the coastline is heavily indented, and the bottom of the lake is rocky. In the western part of the southern coast, clay canyons, dried mountains and hills prevail.



■ Issyk-Kul



The southern shore is suitable for those who seek solitude, nature and rest away from civilization and noise.

Issyk-Kul has an ancient and rich history, the first written references to the lake date back to the 2nd century B.C. On its shores lived primitive people who left behind numerous petroglyphs that can be seen to this day. The ancient Scythian tribes also lived here in their main city Chigu. Now this city is under Issyk-Kul's water. Nestorians, who brought the relics of St. Matthew to the shores of the lake, were here (the relics exact location is still one of the main mysteries of Issyk-Kul). For modern sights it is worth mentioning the city of Karakol, remarkable for its architecture, as well as the cultural center of Ruh Ordo in the city of Cholpon-Ata. Also, every two years on the



shores of the lake there are the "World Nomadic Games" - the world's largest competition for nomadic sports.

### ■ Ala-Kul

Ala-Kul is a large high-mountain glacial lake, located in the eastern part of the Terskey Ala-Too Range on the southern shore of Lake Issyk-Kul, near the city of Karakol. The lake is located in a vast basin between the Karakol and Altyn-Arashan Canyons and has no runoff. The



name of the lake from Kyrgyz translates as "a motley lake" which fits perfectly to this place. Ala-Kul really amazes with its colors: bright turquoise water adjoins with mountains, snow, green grass and flowers. In addition to the lake, the trekking route that leads to the lake also attracts tourists. There are two routes to the lake: through the picturesque Karakol Gorge or amazing Altyn-Arashan Gorge, but in this case it is necessary to overcome the Ala-Kul pass (altitude 3900 meters).

### ■ Fairy Tale Canyon

Fairy Tale Canyon / Skazka Canyon is a small gorge on the southern shore of Issyk-Kul, famous for its red clay rocks. Fairy Tale Canyon is a very popular place for tourists. The reason for this is the ease of access to the canyon and its stunning landscapes. Erosion of the soil, for thousands of years, has created the beautiful contrasts in Fairy Tale Canyon. In the canyon you can find a variety of bizarre figures of stone and clay. It is composed of multi-colored clays, minerals and rocks, that add to the scenic beauty of this place.

Some of the natural sculptures in the canyon have names. The most recognizable is the "Chinese Wall", very reminiscent of the famous architectural monument of China. It is worth adding that in winter there is almost no snow,





■ Fairy Tale Canyon

and therefore you can visit the canyon at any time of the year. The canyon is very close to the road and the shore of the lake, and therefore it is an excellent option for a rest or picnic arrangement.

### ■ **Ala-Archa National Park**

The Ala-Archa National Park is one of the most attractive places for tourists and local residents near Bishkek. The gorge is located 30 kilometers south of the capital city Bishkek . Ala Archa is the natural park with many opportunities for camping, hiking,

trekking, and mountaineering. There are many places to visit, for instance, the hut of Ractek, Adygene Lake, Big Ala-Archa and Ak-Sai glaciers, as well as the highest peaks of the Kyrgyz ridge: Korona peak, Svobodnaya Korea Peak, Semenov-Tian-Shansky Peak and many others. In general, Ala-Archa has more than 150 mountain routes and many hiking trails. The gorge is at an altitude of 1600 to 4860 meters above sea level. There are many rare and beautiful plants such as the Tian-Shan fir, pine, juniper birch, willow and many others.



■ Ala-Archa National Park





Many species of animals, including Red Book species, live in the gorge.

■ **Suusamyr**

Suusamyr is a valley 150 km long and lies between the three major ridges of the northern Tien Shan: Kyrgyz, Suusamyr-Too and Jungal-Too. The average height of the valley is 2300 meters, and therefore even in the summer, it is cool there. In the valley there are two large rivers: Suusamyr and Zapadny Karakol. The two rivers merge into one and form the high-water Kekemeren River. The valley is remark-

able for its stunning scenery: the emerald-green grass is adjacent to the rugged rivers and majestic views of the mountains. In winter, there is a mountain-ski base and numerous kumis treatment places in summer. The valley is also popular for paragliding, since there are practically no trees. In addition to natural attractions, there are some cultural attractions. One of these is Kojomkul Mazaar - which is the grave of a famous Kyrgyz hero, who participated in the construction. On the walls of the Mazar, one can still see the preserved imprints of his huge hands. The Mazar is situated in the







■ Kel-Suu

village of Kojomku, and there is also a local museum where it is possible to learn about the history of the Suusamyр Valley.

A lot of routes for all types of tourism pass through Suusamyр and include hiking, trekking, bicycle, automobile, motorcycle, etc.

#### ■ Kel-Suu

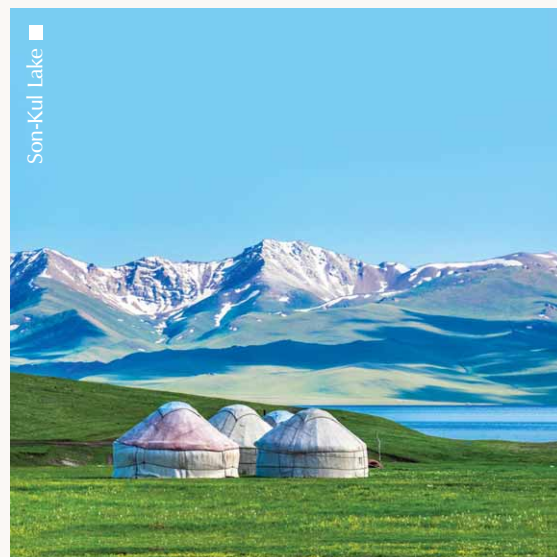
Kel-Suu is a high-altitude lake of glacial origin at an altitude of 3,500 meters, located in the south-eastern part of the Naryn region near the Kyrgyz-Chinese border. The lake is remarkable for its stunning views - the water in it is bright blue and very beautifully contrasts with the surrounding rocks. This is one of the most beautiful and at the same time hard-to-reach places in Kyrgyzstan. Kehl-Suu is a landslide lake, formed in a large cleft between rocks. The length of the lake is 9 kilometers and the width varies from 500 meters to 2 kilometers in the widest area. The lake has only one shore so therefore it is not possible to see all the lake from the shore. The lake has one interesting feature, in honor of which it was given such a name. Kel-Suu is translated from Kyrgyz as "leaving water". And indeed, sometimes the lake disappears, leaking into underground caves and grottoes. Therefore before going there, it is necessary to know if there is water in the lake. The lake is very difficult to

access. It is located on the hard-to-reach ridge of Kokshaal-Too and the path there lies through the vast Ak-Sai valley and is replete with swampy places and fords. Only an off-road vehicle with an experienced driver can get to this place. As the lake is in the border area, a border zone permits is required to enter.

#### ■ Son-Kul Lake

Son-Kul Lake (also Song-Kul, Son-Köl, Sonkul, etc.) is the second largest lake in Kyrgyzstan, located in Naryn Region about 280 kilometers from Bishkek.

Son-Kul is located at an altitude of 3000 meters in a large inter-mountain valley, surrounded from the north by the Sonkul-Too Ridge and the Moldo-Too Ridge from the south. The lake is cold and quite deep - the



■ Son-Kul Lake

maximum depth of the lake is 14 meters. Son-Kul freezes approximately in mid-November and melts only by mid-April. The area around the lake is very picturesque, especially in summer. Hills and snowy peaks of the Central Tien-Shan ridges surround Son-Kul. Due to the high altitude, there are no trees, only low hard grass and edelweiss can grow in these conditions. Although the lake is not very large in size, its banks are quite different from each other. The southern and eastern coasts are

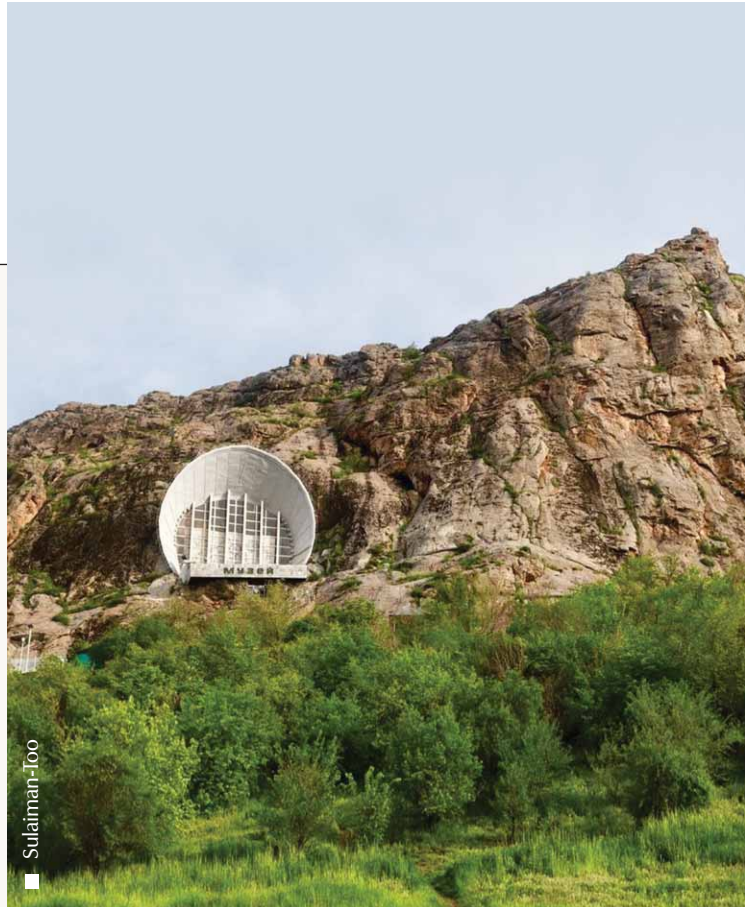


quite flat and in some places are swamped, while the north and west coasts are quite steep. The road that runs along the lake winds about the hills. It is especially pleasant to ride it by bike. The best view of the lake opens from the west coast. Son-Kul is a rather inaccessible place, and therefore anthropogenic influence is minimized here. Only in the summer period nomad camps from villages located in the neighboring Jumgal Valley and from Naryn come here. The rest of the time the Son Kul Valley is completely uninhabited. On the northern shore of the lake is located the only stone building in the entire valley - the mausoleum of Tailak Baatyr, built in the late 19th century.

Son-Kul Lake is a very popular place for tourists and many tourist routes pass here. Thanks to the convenient geographical location of the lake, a journey from one part of the country to another can be combined with a visit to Son-Kul. Son-Kul is very interesting because in the summer it is possible to see the real nomadic way of life and spend a couple of days away from civilization.

### ■ Sulaiman-Too

Sulaiman-Too is the most important cultural landmark in Kyrgyzstan and the first object of the country, included on UNESCO's cultural heritage list, located in the heart of Osh. The mountain is almost a kilometer in length and has five peaks, the highest one rises to a height of 150 meters above the city. Due to geological features, there are many caves and grottoes in the mountain, which is quite unusual for Kyrgyzstan. In the early appearance of civilizations in Central Asia, this comparatively small mountain had a cult significance for people. The first traces of worship near the mountain go to the deepest antiquity and date back to the X-XII centuries BC, ie more than 3000 years ago. To this day, many petroglyphic drawings on the mountain remind of this. Therefore it is not surprising that the oldest city in Central Asia - Osh, was founded around the mountain. In the Middle Ages, the mountain became an important object of religious worship associated with



the Islamic religion. The mountain is named after the legendary King Solomon, revered in Islam and in Christianity. According to legend, on the top of this mountain the prophet prayed and left traces of the knees and forehead of the praying. The historical significance of the mountain is closely connected with the name of Babur - the famous military commander and the founder of the Mughal Empire. The empire stretching from the southern borders of the Ferghana Valley to the southern part of India. Babur wrote about the mountain in his famous work Baburnama. He was born close to Osh and loved to walk along Sulayman-Too and pray in solitude on its slopes. To do this, Babur ordered to build on the mountain a small prayer house, which is known as "the house of Babur", officially called the Takhta-Sulayman mosque. Only the replica of the original structure reached us, since in the Soviet years, as part of the campaign against religion, the construction of the 16th century was demolished and restored in 1991. A large number of legends are associated with Mount Sulaiman-Too. Widely known smooth stone, where women roll down, wishing to have a child. The slopes of the mountains are covered with Arabic letters, the meaning of which to this day is for certain unknown, and even geologically the





formations on its slopes in the form of spots have the appearance of various animals. In the Soviet period on the slopes of the mountain was built a museum right in the cave of the mountain. The exposition of the museum tells about the history of Osh and the region. The architecture of the museum is an outstanding example of Soviet modernism. At the foot of the mountain is also a large number of historical attractions, associated, mainly with the Islamic religion. The main of them are the mosques Ravat-Abdullahan, built in the 16th century and the mausoleum of Asaf-ibn-Bukhriya, dating from the 11th century. All this makes Sulaiman-Too the most important Islamic shrine in Central Asia, which is visited annually by thousands of pilgrims and tourists from all over the world.

There are also more modern sights, for example, the highest three-story yurt in the world, where a small museum dedicated to the nomadic history of the Kyrgyz people.

### ■ Madygen Geopark

The Madygen Geopark is located on the territory of the Batken region in the southwestern part of Kyrgyzstan. The successful location of the geopark at the intersection of cross-border routes in the modern Silk Road system connecting neighboring Tajikistan and

Uzbekistan creates excellent conditions for visiting it and increasing popularity among tourists and researchers.

The territory of the Geopark covers objects of geological heritage of international significance, as well as landscapes of rare beauty of the northern foothills of the Turkestan ridge in the Sokh-Sumbula interfluvium. On a relatively small territory (about 6 thousand km<sup>2</sup>), the geo-diversity with a high potential for scientific research is clearly and compactly presented, education of youth and schoolchildren, as well as the development of geotourism and the preservation of unique tourist resources. The Turkestan Ridge and the Ferghana Valley became the result of the rich geological history of the Southern Tien Shan. The foothill region formed between them has become a place for the formation of outstanding geological monuments of nature, including objects of international importance, which are combined into a capacious term - geo-diversity.

The age of the Madygen geopark is more than 230 million years old - it corresponds to the border of the Middle and Upper Triassic. At this key stage in the history of the Earth, dinosaurs appear, the ancestors of modern mammals, turtles, frogs and other groups, the last representatives of the Paleozoic fauna die out.



# Tourism in PAKISTAN



Pakistan is blessed with amazing landscapes, natural beauty, history and rich cultural heritage besides having three mountains' ranges, glaciers, lakes, Valleys and unique wild flora and fauna that can attract tourism from both local and foreign markets.

Among these hidden treasures and gems of tourism, the top tourist attractions include Central Karakoram National Park that is located in Skardu district of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan and encompasses some of the world's highest peaks and largest glaciers. Internationally renowned for mountaineering, rock climbing and trekking opportunities, it contains the greatest concentration of high mountains on earth and has four peaks over 8,000 m including K2, Gasherbrum-I,

Gasherbrum-II and Broad Peak, and sixty peaks higher than 7,000 m. The park was placed on the World Heritage Site Tentative List in 2016. The park is considered as one of the most beautiful national parks in Pakistan that includes the Baltoro, Panmah, Biafo and Hispar glaciers and their tributary glaciers.

The best conditions for a mountaineering trip are generally during Spring, early-Autumn, and Summer. These seasons provide





punjabPatriata Chairlift - New Murre ■

formed by the Hunza River, bordering Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor to the north and the Xinjiang region of China to the northeast. It is one of the most exotic places for tourists with several viewpoints of peaks like Rakaposhi, Passu cones, Lady Finger peak, Attabad Lake and Eagle Nest. Hunza's Cherry Blossom Spring season and Autumn have the most breathtaking views leaving the tourists spell bound.

#### ■ Castle of Baltit Fort

The fairy-tale-like Castle of Baltit Fort located in the Hunza Valley has the foundations date back to 700 years, with rebuilds and alterations over the centuries. It has strong legacies of cultural and ethnic relationship of Balti people. Stilted on massive legs, its colored glass and wooden bay windows look out over the valley. It has

been on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative list since 2004.

#### ■ Passu Cones

Breathtaking views of majestic Passu Cones (few pointed cone-like snow covered peaks)

are in the Karakoram Range in north of the Gulmit village in Gojal Valley. Passu is highly recommended for trekking and hiking to have a great time in scenic landscape and getting taste of heavenly glimpses of nature.

#### ■ Neelum Valley

One of the picturesque valleys of Pakistan, Neelum Valley is a top tourist



Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur -Shakargarh ■

more pleasant and stable weather conditions and allow mountaineers to avoid heavy snowfalls, extremely cold temperatures and strong winds. Driving through the Karakoram Highway is the best passage for hikers, bikers, drivers, and dedicated adventure travelers.

Climbing, hiking, trekking, camping, sight-seeing, mountaineering, biking, visiting snow lakes, seeing giants of nature, visiting lakes for fishing and boating are among the activities of tourists here.

Another attraction in Gilgit Baltistan is Hunza - a mountainous valley in the northern part of the Gilgit-Baltistan



Trango Tower - Karakoram Range ■





attraction in Azad Jammu & Kashmir having attractive tourist sites. The valley is named after the river of Neelum which flows through the region that is named after a variety of stones "Neelum" (Blue Sapphire gemstone) found here. It has a range of mountains covered with snow, over 350 villages and a number of streams and forests. The tourist attraction sites in the valley including Noori Top, Ratti Gali, Sharda, Taobat, Arrang Kel, Keran and other that attract tourists from across the world.

The valley is also famous for the production of apricots which are consumed in the country and exported abroad. The best season for

visit is between June to September while in winters, it has stunning snowy landscapes.

#### ■ Ratti Gali

Ratti Gali Lake is an alpine glacial lake located in Neelum Valley, Azad Kashmir at an altitude of 3,683 meters fed by the gigantic glacial melt of the surrounding mountains.

Located at a jaw-dropping elevation, Ratti Gali Lake is one of the many beautiful glacial lakes in Neelum Valley and for tourists, it is considered among heavenly places in Azad Kashmir. Being one of the highest lakes in the world by altitude, tourists and nature

■ Ratti Gali - Azad Jammu & Kashmir







lovers never miss visiting it when it is a trip to Azad Kashmir.

#### ■ Kalasha

The Kalasha or Kalash, also called Waigali or Wai, are a Dardic Indo-Aryan indigenous people residing in the Chitral District of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. The Kalash population in Pakistan numbers only in a few thousands making them one of the smallest ethnic minorities in Pakistan. It is a scenic valley with rich cultural heritage and traditional values while the vibrant costumes of people of Kalash compel both local and foreign tourists to meet the people and record memories with them.

#### ■ Picturtesque Kumrat valley

Picturtesque Kumrat valley is in Upper Dir District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan.

Every summer season thousands of tourists from different areas of the country visit Kumrat valley for its cool weather, green pastures, snow clad mountains, clear blue river Panjkora, foggy mounds and forests that are attractions of the region and serve as habitats for variety of flora and fauna.

The valley has become the new big thing for the last couple of years with fables of its dense pines, tall dark mountains, waterfalls and raging rivers.





### ■ Lahore

The city of culture and Heritage - Lahore is the second biggest city in Pakistan and provincial capital of Punjab that hosts much of Pakistan's tourist industry, with major attractions including the Walled City, the famous Badshahi and Wazir Khan mosques, Lahore Fort and Shalamar Gardens from Mughal era as well as several Sufi shrines, foods and rich cultural values. The culture of Lahori People is a manifestation of the lifestyle, festivals, literature, music, language, politics, cuisine and socio-economic conditions of its people.

Minar-e-Pakistan, Iqbal Park, Lahore Zoo, Heritage Museums at Lahore, Wagah Border are also among the tourist attractions besides traditional Bazaars including Anarkali Bazaar, Bano Bazaar, Liberty Market, Ichhra Bazaar, Urdu Bazaar, Hall Road, Fortress, Emporium Mall, Karim Block Market etc. Lahore is also known as a heaven for foodie persons and the best Desi street foods include Paaya by Phajja, Halwa Puri, Chanay, Chaats, Katlama, Laddu Peethi, Nihari, Qeema Wala Naan, Daal Chawal, Biryani, Pathoray, Anda Shami, Samosa, Tawa Chicken, Dahi Baray, Gol Gappay, Karahi, Falooda, Lassi etc.

### ■ Cholistan Desert

Cholistan Desert locally known as Rohi is a large desert in the southern part of Punjab. The name is derived from the Turkic word chol, meaning "sands," and istan, a Persian suffix meaning "land of".

Besides other desert forts, Derawar Fort is

a large square fortress with forty bastions that are visible for many miles in the Cholistan Desert. The fort is an important place for tourists while the off-road Cholistan Desert Jeep Rally is the annual event. The tourist attractions of the desert include Jeep safari, camel safari, see desert life and culture, sand bashing and sightseeing.

### ■ Archaeological Ruins

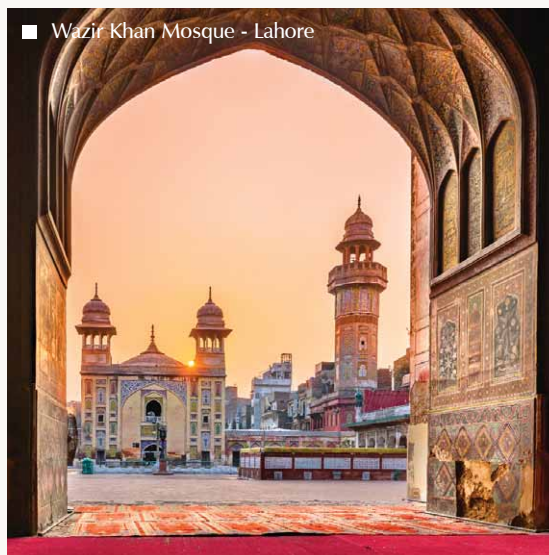
Located in Sindh Province, Archaeological Ruins of Moenjodaro built in 2500 BCE is among the largest settlements of the Indus Valley Civilization and one of the major early



■ Noor Mahal - Bahawalpur



■ The Lansdowne Bridge built over Indus River



■ Wazir Khan Mosque - Lahore





■ Nanga Parbat 8126m - Gilgit Baltistan s

ancient cities in Pakistan. Indus valley civilization flourished in about the same time when ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia arose in.

The decline of Indus Valley Civilization abandoned Moenjodaro in 19th century BCE and rediscovered in 1920s. The construction of this World Heritage Site - Moenjodaro was so well planned that during the excavations so far, presence of around 700 wells depict drainage and bathing systems at the site.

### ■ Makran

Makran is the coastal region of Baluchistan Province and a semi-desert coastal strip. The rising port city of Gwadar located on the southwestern coast of Baluchistan is not only a future trade hub but a major tourist destination. The journey from Karachi to Gwadar and all the way to Jiwini along the Makran Coastal Highway is dotted with extraordinary tourist attractions including serene golden beaches, natural formations, volcanic sites, wetlands, flora and fauna, and superb scener-

ies. The popular tourist destinations at Makran Coastal Highway include Mud Volcano, Kund Malir Beach, Golden Beach, Princess of Hope, The Sphinx, Buzi Pass, Ormara Beach and Gwader. Visiting Makran Coast is the journey of thrill, pleasure and adventure.

### ■ Tourism Investment Opportunities and Incentives as well as tourism projects in Pakistan

Pakistan is a growing tourism market with 96 percent of domestic tourists. The investment opportunities in Gilgit Baltistan region include upgradation of 5 motels for 20 year-lease with initial Capital Investment in Hunza, Skardu, Rama Lake, Phandar and Astak and three sites for construction of new Hotels in Naltar, Thalichi and Gilgit City. Under the 20-year lease of Motels, there is a proposal of addition of 15 new rooms and upgradation of existing 30 rooms and allied facilities at PTDC Motel Hunza with Capital Investment of US\$





Ferozpur - Karachi

0.56 million and minimum Annual Lease US\$ 31,000 and Internal Rate of Return (IRR) 34%. The place is easily accessible via Karakoram Highway with an average room rate of US\$ 60 per night while the tourist season is April - October.

For PTDC Motel Skardu, addition of 20 news rooms is proposed with upgradation of existing 29 rooms and restaurant under the 20-year lease basis with Capital Investment of US\$ 0.46 million and minimum annual lease of US\$ 31,000 and IRR of 26%. This place is easily accessible by air and Karakoram Highway with average room rate US\$ 70 per night and the tourist season is April-September.

PTDC Motel Rama Lake has the investment proposal of addition of 20 new rooms with upgradation of existing 12 rooms and restaurant, the average room rate is US\$ 60 per night and tourism season is April to September.

The Capital Investment is US\$ 0.44 million with Minimum Annual Lease US\$ 10,000 and IRR of 20%. For PTDC Motel Phandar, an addition of 12 new rooms is proposed with upgradation of existing 12 rooms, restaurant and allied facilities with Capital Investment of US\$ 0.21 million, Minimum Annual Lease US\$ 8000 and IRR of 39%. The area is easily accessible by air and

Derawar Fort - Bahawalpur





■ Balcony of Nazimuddin Tomb, Makli - Thatta



Karakoram Highway with average room rate of US\$ 60 per night and tourist season is April-September.

The PTDC Motel Astak has the investment proposal of addition of 12 new rooms with upgradation of existing rooms and allied facilities. The area is easily accessible by air and road through Karakoram Highway with an average room rate of US\$ 60 per night and Tourist season is April-September. The capital Investment is US\$ 0.11 million, minimum annual lease is US\$ 11,000 and IRR of 40%.

Three sites for construction of new hotels in Gilgit Baltistan include land at Natlar, District

Gilgit, Land at Thalichi, District Gilgit and Land at Gilgit City at District Gilgit.

There is a proposal of 80 room resort hotel at 163,350 sq.ft at Naltar with estimated investment of US \$ 5.4 million, estimated annual lease US\$ 35,000 and estimated IRR 30%. A proposal of 40 room hotel at 43,560 sq.ft. at Thalichi with an estimated cost of US\$ 208 million, estimated annual lease US\$ 13,000 and estimated IRR 30%.

A proposal of 80 room hotel at 59,895 sq.ft. at Gilgit City with an estimated investment of US\$ 5.4 million, estimated Annual Lease US\$ 30,000 and Estimated IRR 30%.

■ Pakistan Commercial Capital - Karachi





# Tourism in TAJIKISTAN



The rich history and cultural heritage, unique picturesque nature and mesmerizing sites of Tajikistan are a stable basis for the tourism development, which is considered to be one of the proven sources for the development of the national economy.

Considering all these factors and to improve the social and economic situation in the country, and to provide the population with productive employment and increase the economic activity level of the population - 2018 was declared as the Year of Tourism Development and Folk Crafts and 2019-2021 as the Years of Rural Development, Tourism and Folk Crafts at the initiative of the Founder of Peace and National Unity - Leader of the Nation, President Emomali Rahmon.

A membership of Tajikistan in the World Tourism Organization, joining the World Tourism Cities Federation by the capital of our country - Dushanbe, declaring Dushanbe as the Tourism Capital of the Economic Cooperation Organization for 2020-2021, and the inclusion of historic site "Sarazm" and "National Garden" in the UNESCO World Heritage list as well as "Chakan - the embroidery art of the Republic of Tajikistan", "Navruz", "Oshi Palov" and "Shashmaqom" in the list of intangible cultural heritage, are altogether the proof to that, and, besides, it has facilitated the promotion of the positive tourist image of Tajikistan around the world.

Considering the importance of this key sector in the economic and social development of the country, tourism sector is identified as a priority development area in the National Development Strategy for the period up to 2030.

To ensure the attractiveness of the sector for domestic and foreign investors, the Government of the country has established a number of incentives and at the initial stage created the economic and legal framework for the improvement of tourist sites



and the creation of the required infrastructure. According to the adopted documents, during the first five years of operation, travel agencies are exempted from income tax, from value added tax and customs duties for the import of equipment and construction materials used for the construction of tourist infrastructure. The customs duties for the imports of new cars for tourism purposes have been reduced by 50 percent.

A multi-entry five-year visa is issued in an attempt to further improve the investment climate and encourage foreign entrepreneurs who invest more than 1 million dollars in the economy of Tajikistan, and a multi-entry three-year visa is issued to facilitate the movement of compatriots born in Tajikistan.

A multiple-entry tourist visa up to 60 days was put in place to attract tourists and citizens of foreign countries as much as possible.

The introduction of electronic visa and visa-free regime with 12 countries, the introduction of simplified visa regime with 126 countries, as well as the cancellation of internal tourist registration will allow tourists and other foreign nationals to apply online at [www.evisa.tj](http://www.evisa.tj), without going to Tajikistan's consulates.

In Tajikistan, the contribution of law-enforcement authorities in ensuring the safety of domestic and foreign tourists is significant and ensuring a safe tourism and recreation for tourists is always a top priority. Taking meas-

ures to ensure the safety of tourists is one of the objectives of the Tourism Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the period up to 2030.

Currently, there are more than 237 travel companies, 188 hotels, 28 hostels and motels, 49 resorts, 8 health centers and clinics, 7 recreation centers, 1 boarding guest house, 2 campsites and 4 recreation and tourism camps operating in the tourist sector.

The climate of Tajikistan is continental and subtropical, with moderate to cold temperatures in the mountains. Within a short period of time, you can visit both the snow-capped foothills of the eastern Pamir and Shahritus district located in southern part of the country (Khatlon region) where the temperature reaches 40 degree Celsius.

As part of promotion of domestic and international tourism in Tajikistan, more than 3,000 historical and cultural monuments have been registered and a large number of environmental resources are being studied for inclusion in the tourist list.

### ■ Gorno-Badakhshan

Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is one of the most attractive tourist destinations and is famous for its beautiful rivers and lakes, mountains and unique landscapes. The magnificent historical sites and health care facilities such as Sarez Lake, Garmchashma, Avj,



■ Badakhshan-National Park, Tajikistan



Yamchun, Jelondeh, Bibi Fatima Zuhro, the highest mountain ranges in the world and the glaciers of Pamir contribute to the development of tourism in the region.

Every year many tourists and mountain-climbers visit the peaks of Ismoil Somoni, Istiqloliyat, Korzhenevsky, Abuali ibn Sino (Avicenna), Glaciers - Fedchenko, Khirson, lakes - Karakul, Sarez, Yashilkul, Burunkul, healing springs - Jelondeh, Garmchashma, Avj, Bibi Fatima Zuhro, Modiyon, National Park of Tajikistan, "Zorkul" Nature Reserve, Pamir Botanical Garden. Tourists also visit historical and cultural sites of the region, including the Kahkaha, Yamchun, Karon and Vamar castles, mausoleums and museums, and learn about the ancient culture and traditions of local residents.

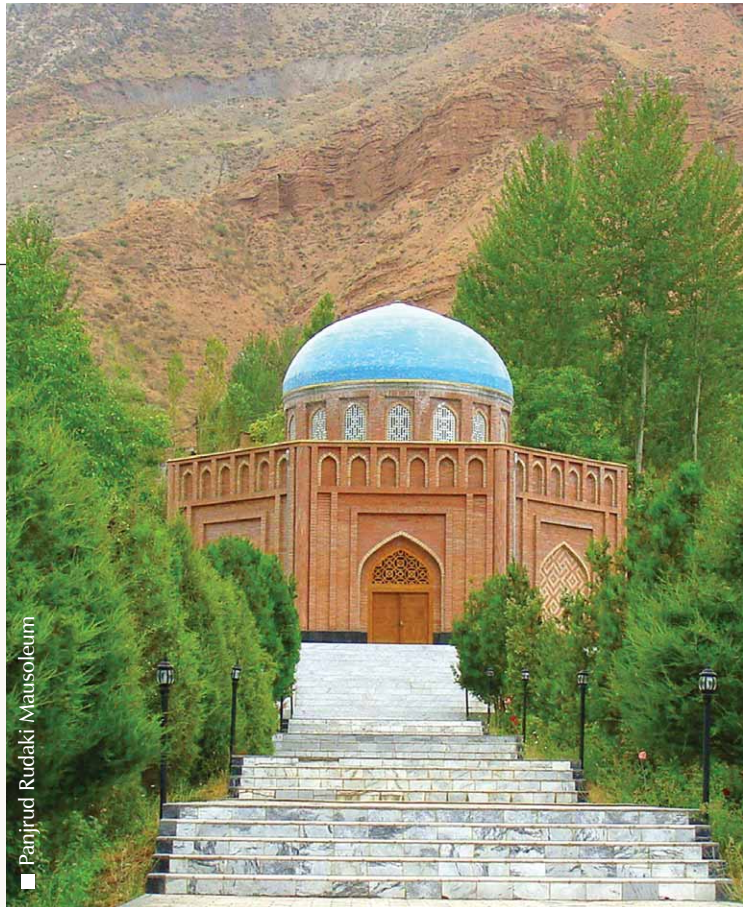


■ Khujand Sughd Region Historical Museum

### ■ Sughd region

One of the most attractive tourist destinations in Tajikistan is the northern part of Sughd region, which is famous for its beautiful rivers and lakes, magnificent mountains and unique sights.

The development of tourism in the region is due to the historical sites, such as Sarazm, which dates back more than 5500 years, ancient Panjakent, the birthplace of Tajik and Persian classical literature, Ustod Abuabdullo



■ Panjirud Rudaki Mausoleum

Rudaki in Panjirud village, Fann and Archamaydon Mountains, fabulous lakes, such as Kuli Kalon, Haftkul and others.

### ■ Zarafshan valley

Zarafshan valley fascinates history and culture explorers and mesmerizes nature lovers with its unique monuments, such as ancient Sarazm and ancient Panjakent and amazing views of the Fann mountains and Marghuzor, Alauddin, Kuli Kalon and Iskandarkul lakes. The basin of the Kuli Kalon lake includes the Dushokha, Bibijannat, Siyoh, and Jangal lakes, which are among the most beautiful landscapes of the valley. The magical nature of Alauddin lakes and its surroundings captivates everyone.

### ■ Marghuzor

Marghuzor lakes are located in the valley of the Shing River, each of which is distinguished by its unique color and beauty. These lakes are truly a mysterious wonder of nature and turns out to be a popular destination for hikers and mountaineers, both domestic and foreign in summertime. Moreover, one of the most amazing sites is Iskandarkul, which is 5 kilometers long. There is a waterfall flowing from a height of 30 meters located about two kilometers below the lake, among the rocks, and every tourist dreams to see it. All these





■ Dushanbe's independence monument

resources have allowed Zarafshan to be recognized as the best tourist destination not only inside but also beyond the country.

Khatlon have captivated the hearts of tourists with its ancient monuments containing the history and mysteries of its ancestors, beautiful nature, magic and vast valleys, medicinal plants and clear springs, juicy fruits and pleasant weather.

Nature trips and visits to historical religious sites have become a tradition almost in all districts during the spring. Particularly, the mausoleum of Mir Said Ali Hamadoni in Kulob,

Hulbuk Fortress in Vose district, Khoja Mashhad mausoleum and Chiluchorchashma in Shahritus district, Zaynalobuddin mausoleum in Dusti district, Hazrati Sulton mausoleum in Khovaling district, Sarikhosor waterfall in Baljuvon district, Childukhtaron waterfall in Muminobod district and dozens of other sites are attracting a large number of domestic and foreign tourists.

At present, there are 795 historical, cultural and archeological monuments, 36 museums, 37 resorts and sanatoriums, and 33 cultural and recreation parks in the territory of the



■ Kulob Republican Local Lore Museum Complex





region, which are visited by many tourists every year.

The State Institution "National Museum Complex of Kulob" consists of three subordinate museums: the Museum of History and Ethnography 2700th anniversary of Kulob, the Museum of Literary Heritage and Written Heritage named after Mir Said Ali Hamadoni and the House-Museum of National Poet Saidali Valizoda, which has more than 10,000 elements and patterns.

The art of embroidery is especially developed in the city. In November 2018, Chakan was

included in the UNESCO World Heritage List as the greatest art of humanity.

The Museum of History and Ethnography 2700th anniversary of Kulob is the best museum of the region, where visitors can get acquainted with the art of pottery and stone carving, various coins of the Cyrus the Great (Kurushi Kabir), Ismoil Somoni, Temurid dynasty and copper coins of the XVII-XIX centuries. Men's antique shoulder amulet, some items of women's jewelry (rings, bracelets), armor and spears, and some weapons of the time of Alexander the Great are noteworthy.







■ Varzob Gorge

One of the most popular tourist destinations in Hisor (Gissar) Valley, which is visited by a large number of visitors every year, is the Historical and Ethnographic Reserve "Hisor Fortress". The reserve is an open-air museum of unique historical, archeological and architectural value. In this valley, Tursunzoda district has a beautiful and unique nature and pleasant weather, vineyards and other fruits, plants and healing springs, which can be used for the development of tourism in the area. In particular, the development of eco-agricultural tourism, mountain hiking, hunting, historical and cultural tourism is typical for Tursunzoda district.

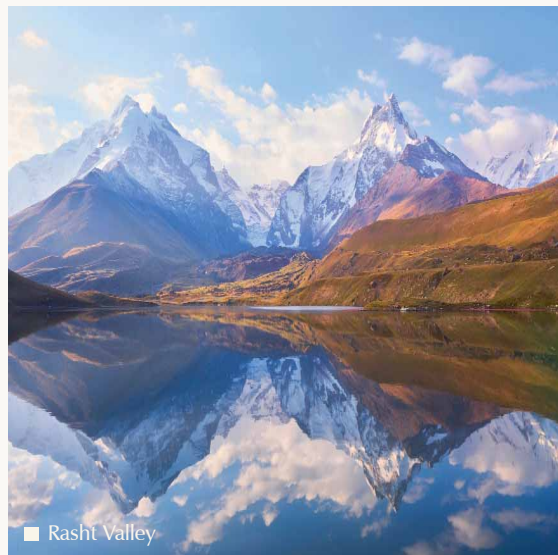
Potential for tourism development in the district and Karatogh forest hunting farm, Ohui Kholdor farm, located on the base of Karatogh forest hunting farm, Shirkent Historical and Natural Park, mountain hiking in the Hisor (Gissar) range, dinosaur footprints in Shirkent, the Pashmi Kuhna (Old Wool) Ancient Mountain Village has a unique nature in Shirkent gorge.

There are a number of picturesque sites worth visiting in Shahrinav district like JSC "Karatogh Health and Recreation Center", beautiful landscapes of Pushtimiyona, Patru, Hakimi, Oyborik, Takhti Sulaimon, and mesmerizing view of Temurdara, Pariyon, Juvozak lakes, the shrine of Mohiyon Khuji spring and

the Mausoleum of Hoja Hasan.

One of the most attractive destinations for tourists is the Romit Gorge, which has a wide range of attractions, clean and fresh water, rare flora and fauna, and an optimal temperate and climate suitable for tourism development. The Romit Gorge offers a variety of tourism types, including ecological, therapeutic, mountaineering, hiking and sports. The area has a number of healing springs, such as Zayron and Obi Shifo, where various diseases are treated.

Varzob district is one of the closest districts to Dushanbe comprising of a well-developed infrastructure and abundant resources for tourism development. The district has been declared a recreational, therapeutic sanatorium and tourist area by the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.



■ Rasht Valley

More than 920 recreation areas are registered in the district, out of which 65 are public and seasonal recreation areas, and the activities of several important tourist facilities are regular, among them Kokhi Malika, Varzob Palace, Gulobod, Guli mayda and Safed-Dara Ski Resort. All modern conditions have been provided in these regions to receive domestic and foreign tourists.

Along with the historical monuments, the Khoja Obi Garm resort, Sarob resort and the

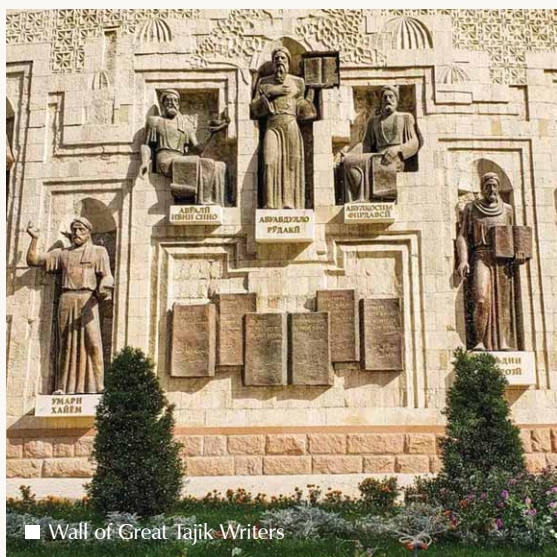


Kharangon boarding house are operating continuously providing all the favorable conditions with advanced customer service for the treatment and recreation of domestic and foreign guests and tourists.

### ■ Rasht Valley

The Rasht Valley is one of the most beautiful areas of the country, with its clear rivers and lakes, unique flora and fauna, towering mountains and hospitable people, and is always in the focus of tourists.

In recent years, the picturesque gorges of Kamarob, Tagoba, Kalanak, Jafr, Hijborak, Yasman and Hoyt, where hunting, ecological, mountaineering, rafting, hiking and horseback riding tourism are developing and gaining popularity among tourists, and the tourist visits to



■ Wall of Great Tajik Writers

these places are increasing.

Lakhsh district located in this area is famous for its healing springs, beautiful waterfalls, fresh air and gorgeous valleys.

Since 95% of the area is mountainous, international mountaineering expeditions have been held to the peak of Ismoil Somoni since 2010. There is a special path from the district to this peak, which leads the climbers to Moskvina glade. The nature of the district is more favorable for the development of ecolog-



■ Statue of Ismoil Somoni

ical tourism and mountain sports. These expeditions are conducted with the participation of athletes and climbers from more than 15 foreign countries.

The Rasht Valley located in Sangvor district is good enough to set up resorts, eco-tourism on a national and international level due to climate, nature, fresh mountain air and clear springs.

Gastronomic tourism in the Republic of Tajikistan is steadily developing. The declaration of the Years of Rural Development, Tourism and Handicrafts has laid a favorable foundation for the development of gastronomic tourism. Tajik national cuisine has revived, and domestic and foreign tourists are enjoying the national dishes.

The regular festivals and celebrations, including Oshi Palav festival, Food and Balloon festival, Spring festival of national dishes, competitions like "Non shudam, shoistai har hon shudam", "National dishes", "Ice Cream and thirst-quenching water" and other festivals, as well as the opening of restaurants and cafes with national motives made a significant impetus to the development of gastronomic tourism and attracting more tourists. Based on that, tourist routes have been arranged, and tourists visit the festivals and use the services of canteens and restaurants.





One of the main attractions of gastronomic tourism in Tajikistan is the dishes served during Navruz, including sumanak, haftsin and haftshin, which are prepared on the International Navruz Day. Navruz is represented as a tourism brand.

Navruz, Mehrgon, Sada, Tirgon, honey, apple, pumpkin festivals and other holidays are being promoted as a tourist brand to attract more tourists to the Republic of Tajikistan.

Tajikistan is known as the habitat of Marco Polo mountain sheep (archar) and is considered suitable for the development of hunting tourism. In addition, there are various and rare species of animals in the protected natural areas of the country, which attract thousands of hunting enthusiasts.

The area of the specially protected natural areas of Tajikistan is 3.1 million hectares, including four (4) State Nature Reserves, Nature Park, Natural-Historical Park, the National Park of Tajikistan, 2 branches of the National Park, 13 nurseries, 37 natural monuments and other facilities. Currently, there are 85 species of rare animals in nature reserves, natural parks and nurseries of the country that are being protected, such as a snow leopard, red wolf, Bukhara deer, gazelle, Bukhara mountain sheep, arhar, Bukhara

Morkhur mountain goat, Persian (goitered) gazelle, and Turkestan lynx, which are of great interest to tourists.

Among these sites, the National Park of Tajikistan is unique in Central Asia with its splendor and beauty, historical monuments and rare flora and fauna. This fantastic site is located in the central part of the Pamirs and Alai and covers an area of 2.6 million hectares and in 2013 was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List as a unique natural site. Moreover, it should be noted that there are many more picturesque sites in our beloved Motherland, such as "Dashtijum", "Romit", "Beshai Palangon" (Tigrovaya Balka) that are popular among people with their unique nature.

The infrastructure of that region plays an important role in the development of winter tourism in certain regions of the country, and we are using all opportunities to attract tourists and develop this type of tourism, which will bring desired results. The analyses show that if a few years ago tourists visited only in the summer time, nowadays, as a result of promotion of the country's tourism opportunities in the global industry markets, the number of tourists is increasing for all seasons, including winter and spring.



# Tourism in TÜRKIYE



Türkiye, the meeting point of Europe, Asia, the Middle East and Africa, is a nonpareil country with a diverse culture and almost infinite tourism locations. Packed with ancient sites and magical landscapes, Türkiye offers visitors memorable experiences and unique tastes, with tourism offering meeting all tastes.

Astonishing gastronomical experiences, natural beauties, many of which are world wonders, ancient historical sites that changed the course of history, and shopping of all kinds are just a bit of what Türkiye has to offer year-round. Visitors can go on culinary tours, tasting delicious and authentic dishes made with local produce and spices. Each region features unique

platters. For shopping enthusiasts, centuries-old covered bazaars carry local handcrafts, street markets and local women's cooperative shops can be found around every town.

The Turkish Riviera has a mild climate with 300 days of sunshine a year and is excellent for water sports, diving, windsurfing, and yachting. Türkiye's turquoise





Atatürk Cultural Center, Istanbul

culture.

The most popular destinations attracting visitors to Türkiye are the TurkAegean, the Turkish Riviera, the Cappadocia region, Göbeklitepe and Istanbul.

### ■ Following the paths of history: TurkAegean

Türkiye's Aegean coast is home to some must-see destinations and must-have authentic experiences, including many UNESCO World Heritage sites and three of the ancient world's wonders. The region is like an open-air museum where you can discover the history of mankind step by step among the archaeological remains. Better known as the 'Coast of Happiness', the TurkAegean is where history is scattered into daily life. Some of these ancient sites attracting visitors are Troy in Çanakkale, Pergamum and



Izmir

waters calm its visitors but also surprise them with antiquity that can only be reached by trekking from the shore.

Ephesus in Izmir and the cotton-white travertines of Pamukkale Hierapolis in Denizli.

The 5000-mile Turkish coastline is accompanied by ranges of high mountains.

Adventure and nature enthusiasts participate in outdoor sports, camping, walking, cycling, trekking and visiting national parks, waterfalls, canyons and caves. Enjoying the grape harvests at one of the many vineyards of any region in the country is a millennium-old tradition, as Türkiye is home to the birth of viti-

The Aegean Region of Türkiye offers visitors beautiful landscapes, dazzling coastlines, immaculate beaches, pine woods and olive groves; perfect for nature lovers, photographers, history buffs and adrenaline junkies. Many famous holiday villages and fishing harbours are scattered up and down the coast.



Bodrum

Visitors can enjoy visiting blue-flag beaches, open-air historical sites, luxu-





ry marinas and experience olive oil, wine, local food and high-end hospitality.

Bodrum, Datça and Marmaris are among Türkiye's most popular and visited areas due to their natural surroundings, welcoming people, and delicious Aegean cuisine. All offer excellent diving spots with pristine water and abundant marine life. Located at the meeting point of the Aegean and Marmara seas, Çanakkale is a treasure for history-loving divers.

The Gallipoli Peninsula, surrounded by marine life and the remains of ships sunk during the Çanakkale Campaign, provides scuba enthusiasts with a dive that blends history and nature.

### ■ A Mediterranean Enchantment: The Turkish Riviera

The Turkish Riviera, which has been attracting visitors for centuries with its thousand kilometres of dazzling coastline and a mild climate featuring 300 days of sunshine a year, is ideal for summer vacation experiences.

With magnificent natural beauties, unmatched weather conditions, and deep history, the bright sun and blue sea of the dreamy Turkish Mediterranean welcome visitors all year. Known as the Turkish Riviera, this lush coastal region offers ancient cities, castles, ports, temples, and much more.

The Turkish Riviera possesses a unique cultural heritage home to millennia of civilisations. The Ancient Cities of Patara, Aspendos and Sagalassos are among those centres that reveal the vast historical heritage of the Turkish Riviera. Located 200 kilometres from the Antalya city centre and a leading city of the Lycian Empire, Patara is where Saint Nicholas, known as Santa Claus, lived. The Saint Nicholas Church in Patara is a significant monument of Eastern Roman art history and the most outstanding example of the Middle East Roman Period with its architectural style and decorations. Aspendos, located 45 kilometres east of Antalya, is home to one of the best-preserved Roman Period theatres in Anatolia and the entire Mediterranean world.

Sagalassos, in the Aglasun district of Burdur, is the world's highest-altitude ancient city, with a theatre that seated nine thousand people. Sagalassos, the most important city of the Roman Imperial Period in the Pisidia region, was included in the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List in 2009.

The tourism capital of the Turkish Riviera, Antalya, is famed for its clean beaches stretching as far as the eye can see and offers 229 Blue Flag beaches. Antalya's warm weather, pristine beaches, lush nature, and ancient treasures offer a prolonged summer to its visitors, where visitors can enjoy these





■ Turkish Riviera

beaches until the end of November or even the beginning of December.

Other than sea vacationers Belek, the famous resort district of Antalya attracts visitors with golf courses designed by world-famous golfers. Belek is a significant centre for golf tourism, featuring luxurious hotels, resorts, and infrastructure famed among the European golf world.

Antalya is a genuine trekking paradise. The Lycian Way and St. Paul's Road, ranked among the most beautiful routes in the world, are within the borders of this sunny city. The Lycian Way, Türkiye's first long-distance hiking route, is a 500-kilometre route

extending from Fethiye to Antalya.

Antalya is also a globally renowned dive centre.

The city offers many water and nature sports opportunities. A world-class diving experience is available even in autumn and winter.

### ■ Tas Tepeler - Land of grand transformation

Covering an area of 200 km from one end to the other, Tas Tepeler is an Anatolian and Upper Mesopotamian region which hosted the earliest settled communities. With a twelve-thousand-year-old history, the region

■ Antalya





was the stage of an important transformation in world history - the transformation that took us from hunter-gatherer lifeways to the first sedentism, new dietary habits and a new way of life during the Neolithic era.

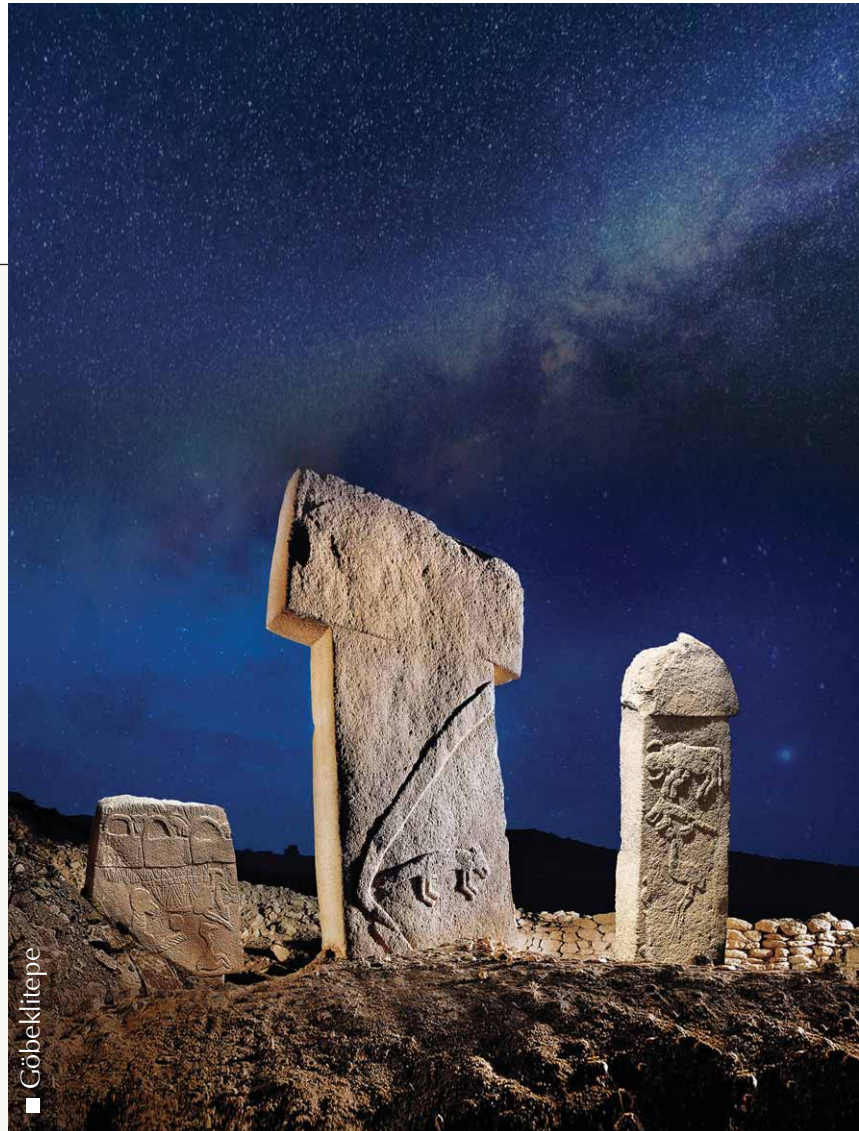
Tas Tepeler Project involves archaeological excavations and research carried out in seven areas: Göbeklitepe, Karahantepe, Gürcütepe, Sayburç, Çakmaktepe, Sefertepe and the Yeni Mahalle mound.

### ■ Göbeklitepe: a striking example of the first Neolithic settlements

Since its discovery, Göbeklitepe has attracted hundreds of thousands of local and foreign visitors.

Located 15 kilometres northeast of Sanliurfa, near Örencik village, the Göbeklitepe Archaeological Site is approximately 11,500 years old. It is home to the world's oldest known monumental remains. A fascinating Neolithic find Göbeklitepe sheds light on one of the most unknown periods of human history. Home to the earliest vestiges of belief in the world, Göbeklitepe was an essential centre in the Neolithic Age. Its relics, decorated with depictions of wild animals, geometrical figures, and a few abstract depictions of humans, are believed to have been used in social gatherings and rituals.

This mysterious and fascinating site was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2018.



■ Göbeklitepe

### ■ Karahantepe: a vast land with mysteries to be revealed

Discovered in 1997, Karahantepe is a 46-kilometre drive to the city centre of Sanliurfa. Spreading on an area of 140,000 sqm, the site has more than 250 T-shaped megaliths that are easily seen on the site.

These stelae, proofs of many structures carved into the bedrock, are decorated with human and animal depictions.

Karahantepe promises essential information to solve the enigma of a new era in history. Tas Tepeler is a crucially important region that proves to us the



■ Göbeklitepe





existence of other areas similar and contemporary to Göbeklitepe.

### ■ Istanbul

Istanbul, the bustling metropolis of Türkiye, is a city full of charm, where the past goes hand in hand with the present, and every step brings to light a relic of times gone by. At the crossroads of two continents - Europe and Asia - this spectacular city is famous for its breathtaking architecture, local cuisine, and genuinely welcoming people.

Türkiye's biggest city straddles two continents. This particularity gives it a unique character that makes the town a sui generis centre of arts and culture worldwide.

With its beautiful historic landmarks, outstanding cuisine, vibrant nightlife, festivals of art and music, the celebration of faith, labyrinths of marketplaces and shopping arcades, the beating heart of Istanbul, and the soul of Bosphorus under the watchful eye

of the Maiden's Tower is a traveler's dream.

Istanbul is famous for many things. What first comes to mind may be the domes of Hagia Sophia and Sultan Ahmet's historic architecture, lavish Ottoman palaces and the city's seagulls hovering above the ferries that glide along the Bosphorus; Istanbul offers visitors a wide variety of experiences for both short- and long-term visitors from arts & culture to shopping and taste.

Istanbul is very popular among global travellers and is consistently ranked among the top destinations in surveys and 'best lists' published in international media.

As Türkiye's largest city, Istanbul stands out with extensive shopping options ranging from historical bazaars to concept stores to sophisticated boutiques.

The Grand Bazaar, one of the world's oldest indoor shopping centres, offers visitors the opportunity to bring home authentic





memories: handwoven carpets, hand-painted ceramic tiles, traditional tea sets and other interesting souvenirs.

Boutiques specializing in Turkish designers invite fashionistas to add one-of-a-kind pieces to their wardrobes, while international and world-renowned brands abound in Taksim and Nisantasi, two of the city's liveliest shopping districts. In addition, there are expansive shopping and entertainment complexes throughout the city.

The food of Istanbul has always been highly acclaimed. Influenced by the many civili-

sations that have shaped this city, Istanbul's cuisine is a beautiful reason to explore the city. Istanbul recently became the 38th destination of the Michelin Guide. As a "gastrocity" Istanbul attracts tourists interested in good food and exceptional flavours.

Istanbul welcomes art lovers and performers and offers excellent opportunities and unique experiences with its multilayered past and present, blending tradition and modernity at every corner. With its vibrant cultural heritage, the ancient city shows itself in the museums, palaces, archaeological sites, and streets.

Konya ■







The plenty of modern and contemporary art museums and galleries, exhibition and concert venues, arts & culture events, and various kinds of festivals bring cultural dynamism to the city.

The city's centre hub for arts and culture is the Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM). Architecturally, the complex is characterised by the massive, bright red hemisphere as you enter. The Centre marks the start of the Beyoğlu Culture Route avenue and stages many performances and exhibitions during the festival.

### ■ Annual Tourism Events

#### Turkish Cuisine Week

The unique Turkish cuisine, a defining element of the Turkish cultural identity, is introduced at the newly launched Turkish Cuisine Week. Held for the first time this year from 21 to 27 May, Turkish Cuisine Week aims to showcase Turkish dishes with all their original qualities as the crown of our tables. Türkiye presents Turkish cuisine with a focus on its healthy, creative, waste-free and sustainable characteristics to the world in a series of events in Türkiye and abroad.

Planned to be an annual event moving forward, Turkish Cuisine Week will showcase

Türkiye's delicious dishes with all their original qualities and unique characteristics.

#### Türkiye Culture Route Festivals

Organized for the first-time last year under the name of Beyoğlu Culture Route Festival and expanded this year with Ankara Culture Route, the Türkiye Culture Route Festivals offers a unique culture and art experience with more inclusive and widespread events in 5 provinces.

The festivals are held between September 16-October 23 in İstanbul, Ankara, Çanakkale, Diyarbakir and Konya. The festivals include nearly 15.000 artists and more than 3000 events ranging from arts to cinema, literature to dance, and music to digital arts, which are suitable for everyone's taste and interest.

In 2023, İzmir, Gaziantep and Adana will also join Türkiye Culture Route Festival series.



# Tourism in TURKMENISTAN



Turkmenistan is a country in South-Central Asia with a population of about 5 million, and an area around half a million square kilometres, or almost the size of Spain.

Neighbouring countries are Iran and Afghanistan to the South, and Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to the North. It is across from Azerbaijan via the Caspian Sea but is otherwise landlocked. Nearly 80% of the country is considered part of the Karakum Desert.

The traditional life of the Turkmen is that of nomadic shepherds, though some have been settled in towns for centuries. The country is known for its fine carpets (one is even featured in its flag) and horses.

Turkmenistan is a country with large potential for an expanded tourism industry. Many of its Central Asian cities were main points of trade on the Silk Road, linking Eastern and Western civilizations.

There are three World Heritage Sites in Turkmenistan, namely the cities of Merv, Nisa and Kunya-Urgench. The latter two were ancient capitals of Parthia and Khorezm respectively, while the former was a major Silk Road post.

Merv, formerly an Achaemenid Satrapy of Margiana, and later Alexandria and Antiochia in Margiana, was a major oasis-city in Central Asia, on the historical Silk Road, located near today's Mary.



Several cities have existed on this site, which is significant for the interchange of culture and politics at a site of major strategic value. It is claimed that Merv was briefly the largest city in the world in the 12th century.

Nisa (also Parthounisa) was an ancient city, located near modern-day Bagyr, a neighbourhood in Ashgabat 18 km southwest of downtown. Nisa is described by some as one of the first capitals of the Parthians. It is traditionally assumed to have been founded by Arsaces I (reigned c. 250 BC-211 BC), and was reputedly the royal necropolis of the Parthian kings, although it has not been established that the fortress at Nisa was either a royal residence or a mausoleum.

Konye-Urgench is a municipality of about 30,000 inhabitants in north-eastern Turkmenistan, just south out the border with Uzbekistan. It is the site of the ancient town of Ürgenç, which contains the unexcavated ruins of the 12th-century capital of Khwarezm. Since 2005, the ruins of Old Urgench have been protected by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

The Caspian Sea coast of Turkmenistan is the site of a number of popular sea resorts, including the Avaza National Resort Zone.

In June 2009, the opening ceremony of the first facilities of the Avaza National Tourist Zone took place on the Caspian coast.

The "Avaza" project initiated by President of

Turkmenistan occupies a special place in the strategic plans of the country over the next decade and, therefore, is dedicated to accumulate all of the most advanced achievements of world architecture, engineering, technical design and creative ideas.

Year after year, all new facilities supplement the infrastructure of a modern international-class seaside resort. It offers high-quality hotels, children's health resorts, cottage villages, health and recreation centers. Particular attention was paid to the creation of a full-scale recreation and entertainment complex - the construction of a water park, yacht and sports clubs, restaurants, campgrounds, all sorts of attractions, shopping centers.

#### ■ Wildlife areas in the desert and other attractions

Desert fauna of Karakum include many kinds of rare animals.

There is a Karakum nature reserve at the flood-land drained by the Amu Darya.

Near Derweze village in the middle of the Karakum Desert is a natural gas deposit. While drilling in 1971, Soviet geologists tapped into a cavern filled with natural gas.

ground beneath the drilling rig collapsed, creating the Darvaza gas crater, a large hole with a diameter of 70 metres (230 ft). To



■ Karakum Desert



avoid poisonous gas discharge, it was decided the best solution was to burn it off.[4] Geologists had hoped the fire would use all the fuel in a matter of days, but the gas is still burning today. Locals have dubbed the cavern the "Door to Hell".

Turkmenistan's tourist attractions, far from being confined to archaic eras, also encompass the flashy marble boulevards of capital city Ashgabat.

Elaborate fountains, rotating statues and record-breaking monuments impression on visitors.

For a more down-to-earth cultural experience, bazaar trips, museum tours and ethnic meals can provide endless opportunities for cultural immersion and interaction with the Turkmen people.



### ■ Ashgabat

On May 1, 2020, the capital of Turkmenistan, the city of Ashgabat, joined the membership of the World Federation of Tourist Cities (WFTG).

Membership in this reputable international tourism organization opens up new opportunities for the city in the development and popularization of various tourist destinations and the development of the city's tourist



appearance. If you're looking for a more rustic setting, Turkmenistan tourism offers the scenic mountain village of Nokhur, where superstition and deep-seated traditions can be traced in everything from clothing styles and cobblestone walls to revered caves and unusual cemeteries.

Desert villages and outlying towns such as Mary, Balkanabat and Turkmenabat likewise provide unique opportunities to come face-to-face with the rural Turkmenistan population and a culture bearing heavy influence from ancient warring nomads and the present-day impact of a reclusive environment.

### ■ Yangykala Canyon

In the far west of Turkmenistan lies a natural attraction that few Turkmen have ever even seen: the Yangykala Canyon, a wind-blown landscape of colorful canyons and strange formations that stretches some 15 miles across the desert to the Garabogazköl Basin.

Yangykala was once underwater, the floor of an ancient ocean that existed millions of years ago. Once that ocean had dried, it left behind a rocky landscape that was slowly eroded by wind and rain, cutting out cliffs and canyons whose walls are now ribbed





■ Yangkala Canyon

like the carcasses of strange stranded sea creatures. And then there are the colors: pinks and oranges, reds and yellows, a spectrum of coral shades that give Yangkala Canyon a distinct look. It's sometimes referred to as the "The Grand Canyon of Central Asia," but the two are very different. Yangkala had no Colorado River to carve its path, so the actual canyon is far less defined than the Grand Canyon.

In many places it looks more like a Martian landscape, pockmarked and chaotic-a place

where few humans come and where even the camels look almost lost.

Weather in Turkmenistan in spring is the best for traveling. In March, temperature reaches +15°C during the daytime and +22°C in April, and as of May, it has summer weather reaching +32°C. Even in April, periodically temperature may drastically jump to +40°C.



■ Avaza National Resort zone



# Tourism in UZBEKISTAN



Uzbekistan can offer any tourist the journey of his dreams. In Uzbekistan architectural masterpieces of the centuries-old history of Uzbeks, incredible nature, harmoniously combining mountains, green valleys and hot deserts, countless festivals in every region of our country, gastronomic diversity and culinary delights, ethno-tourist villages can be found here! Uzbekistan is a mysterious country of the East, where the history of cities gathered in legends, where the sun shines all year round and this reflects the unique nature and beautiful hearts of people. Today Uzbekistan is a country of new opportunities and discoveries for tourists from all over the world. The evidence can be seen by the following facts:

- No restrictions on entry into Uzbekistan;
- Visa-free regime for tourists from 91 countries and a simplified system for issuing an electronic visa for citizens of 57 countries.

- Absence of a language barrier;

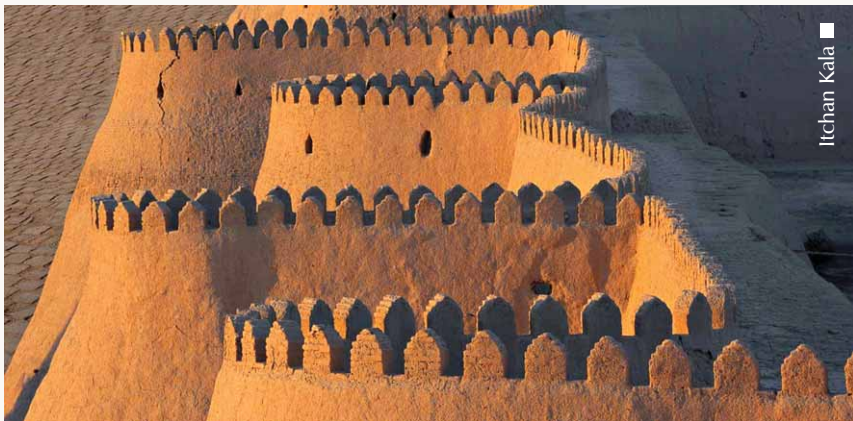
- A huge number of hotels, boutique hotels, health centers, tourist areas of international level and other infrastructure facilities built for the convenience of tourists.

Located in the heart of the Central Asia, the Republic of Uzbekistan is famous for





Kalon Minaret



Itchan Kala

Koran of Usman. In the historical cities included in the UNESCO Cultural Heritage List - Samarkand, Bukhara, Shakhrisabz and Khiva, you can visit the most ancient architectural monuments that have preserved echoes of past eras. In the southernmost part of the country - Surkhandarya, you can travel through mountain gorges or see the ruins of the ancient cities near Termez.

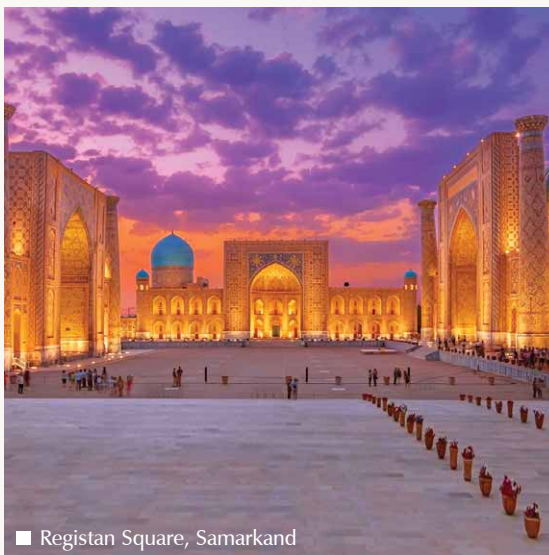
### ■ Types of Tourism

There are an infinite number of ways to have fun and interesting time in the world: go on a trip or adventure, explore something, touch sacred places, see unique places untouched by civilization, improve health, have an active rest, experience extreme sports or just spend time in nature with family or friends, and all this is connected with tourism and the

its numerous architectural monuments, incredible natural landscapes, magnificent palaces, and ruins of fortresses of past civilizations, outstanding cultural events, gastronomic delights and famous craft workshops. From the first visit, our country evokes extraordinary feelings that prompt us to come here repeatedly. The Republic of Uzbekistan includes 12 regions and the autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan. Each corner of Uzbekistan attracts with its features. In Tashkent, you can take a walk in the most beautiful metro in the world or see the most ancient manuscript - the

tourism industry in general. There are all three main types of tourism in Uzbekistan: inbound, outbound and domestic. Inbound and domestic tourism includes both basic and specific tourism products: excursions to tourist attractions; accommodation in hotels,

recreation areas, resorts, sanatoriums, tourist villages, yurt camps, camping; tasting of national dishes and wines; participation in festivals and celebrations; comfortable travel around the country. All types of travel and recreation in Uzbekistan can be divided by types into sports, ethnic, youth, ecological, gastronomic, medical, cul-



■ Registan Square, Samarkand





■ Hiking

tural, MICE, pilgrimage, literary, winter, cycling and other types of tourism. Tourists arriving in Uzbekistan travel either alone, or with friends or family, or as part of a group tour with a guide, which will take travelers along a pre-planned route to interesting and exciting places, in accordance with their goals and planned travel budget.

Those who like to practice sport in the fresh air and away from the big cities are welcomed Uzbekistan. The sport tourism in Uzbekistan can be divided into Water tourism, Air tourism, Mountain tourism, Mountaineering and rock climbing, Hiking, Horse riding, Cycling. The mild climate

allows you to practice most sports almost all year round. For classic winter sports, there are four well-equipped mountain resorts: Chimgan, Beldersay, Amirsoy and Yangiabad. Their number is growing.

Uzbekistan offers numerous opportunities for extreme sports due to its vast and diverse landscapes, although these sports are still new in the country.

These include:

- extreme skiing, snowboard;
- motorcycle racing, rallying, motocross;
- skateboarding, mountain biking, rock climbing, canyoning and paragliding.







### ■ Uzbek Villages

Do you need to relax and feel the harmony and balance on the camping?

Visit one of the Uzbek villages. Uzbekistan offers a wide variety of ethnic tours. Here you can participate in the life of rural residents, live in a remote village or in the yurts, attend a local wedding or celebration of the baby birth, ride horses and camels, go on a safari through the colorful deserts and enjoy the unique exotic fauna of diverse Uzbekistan. Living in a tourist village is a great opportunity to see rural life from the inside. Wake up with the sound of birds, enjoy the most natural breakfast, lie on the grass and admire the blue sky, see how

to cook pilaf on the hearth, how to milk a cow and participate in the harvest, see how to make ceramics by hand or the world's most beautiful silk using ancient technology. All these can be seen during the living in the tourist village.

### ■ Youth Tourism

When planning a trip with friends, you should definitely pay attention to Uzbekistan, because it offers quite a few advantages for young people:

"Affordable prices

"Yurt camps and hostels

"24-hour pubs, bars and





## Tourism in ECO Region

- restaurants
- "Cool electronic music festivals
- "Extreme tours
- "Ski resorts
- "Security

When distributing their budget during the trip, the young tourists often try to save money, and it is real here.

-You can come to the country both by plane and by international train, by bus or taxi, which will save a lot of money.

-You can stay here either in an expensive hotel or in a cozy guest-house or hostel.

-After a long day of sightseeing, you can spend time in a bar or hookah for a small sum, eat pilaf in a teahouse or hang out with friends in a nightclub.

Do you know that you can also come to Uzbekistan to visit a cool party with eminent DJs? The musical festivals, such as "Stikhiya", are held in the country all year round, both in a noisy capital and in the desert on the shores of the dried Aral Sea.

### ■ Uzbek Cuisine

Gastronomy is one more reason to fall in love with Uzbekistan. Having arrived to our country, you can refuse any excursion, but you will never refuse food, especially here, where even at the airport the air is saturated with the smell of delicious dishes. Uzbek cuisine is one of the most colorful and richest in Central Asia. The centuries-old culinary traditions of the settled and nomadic peoples of the region are now collected in



■ National Foods



■ Cabel Cars



■ Tashkent City

a single and understandable puzzle of delicious dishes of Uzbek cuisine. The gastronomic trip to Uzbekistan will give you an unforgettable taste experience for the whole year and you will certainly want to repeat it even at home.

### ■ Museums

It is no secret that Uzbekistan is attractive for its rich cultural and historical heritage, unique architecture and art. The ancient historical monuments of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Shakhrisabz, Khiva, Urgench, Termez, Karakalpakstan are the main foundation





■ Amir Timur Museum

of historical and educational tourism in Uzbekistan. Did you know that in our country there are more than 7000 objects of cultural heritage, many of which are on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

There are more than 400 different museums in our country, of which 155 are state-owned. The most famous large and significant museums of the country are: The State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan, the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan, the State Museum of the History of Timurids, the State Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan, the State Museum of Arts of the Republic of Karakalpakstan named after I.V. Savitsky, State Museum of Nature of Uzbekistan and others.

### ■ Holidays, Festivals and Exhibitions

Uzbekistan is famous for its versatility and grandiosity of major holidays, festivals and exhibitions. Each event is unique. The main purpose for organizing cultural events is to unite the people, transmit true cultural values

and create a global business platform. Every day is a holiday in Uzbekistan. With special trepidation, the people are waiting for March 21 - the personification of the Navroz - "New day" and the spring equinox.

The incredible beauty of this holiday puts the hearts of guests in a state of euphoria. On this day, it is customary to cook sumalyak, halim, cook samsa, hold celebrations and treat guests. One of the most interesting, colorful and informative events in Uzbekistan are festivals. To fully understand the culture and traditions of the Uzbek people, we recommend visiting one of the upcoming festivals during your trip around the country. Our country hosts the most vivid and diverse exhibitions - from folk and applied art products and works of fine art to industrial goods. The exhibition is not just an event, it is also a platform for meetings of professionals of a narrow-specialized circle, search for new partners, exchange of experience and conclusion of contracts. One of the largest events in



■ National dress



Uzbekistan is the Tashkent International Tourism Fair "Tourism on the Silk Road", "Made in Uzbekistan", "International Ziyarah Tourism Week", "Food Week Uzbekistan", "Welcome to Bustanlik", festivals like "Boysun Bahori", "Stikhiya" and others.

### ■ Holy places

On the territory of Uzbekistan, there are many Holy places belonging to the Islamic culture and its current of Sufism, as well as other religions.

The most valuable monuments are recognized as UNESCO World Heritage sites. Among them is the city of Bukhara, called in

the Islamic world Bukhara-Sharif, which means Blessed Bukhara. The city of Samarkand, which has a huge number of priceless monuments. Shakhrisabz is the birthplace of Amir Temur. Of course, these cities have an ancient and rich history and have undergone significant changes throughout their lives.

### ■ Uzbekistan is a unique country

The famous treasury of cultural artifacts, many of which are protected by the UNESCO World Heritage, includes not only majestic monuments of architecture, nature and attractions, but also priceless manu-

■ Bukhara







■ Sitorai-Mohi Hosa Palace, Bukhara

scripts of great poets and philosophers. Many of these manuscripts are located in major religious centers, museums, library archives, and private collections.

The literature of Uzbekistan is the richest part of Uzbek culture. It was based on the oral folk epic of the Turkic peoples.

Ancient Turkic literature, starting from the first monuments of ancient Turkic writing, is an integral part of Uzbek literature, and part of the culture of all the Turkic peoples who inhabited this vast region.

The famous legends of Alpomysh, Afrosiab, Siyavush and many other colorful examples

of oral folk art were composed by local peoples from time immemorial and passed down from generation to generation to convey the full flavor and richness of the national culture.

A little knowledge is acquired before and during the tour; through the Internet, travel agencies, while filling out the customs declaration and other various channels, are sufficient to make traveling to Uzbekistan easy, comfortable and interesting, as well as to get the maximum pleasure and positive emotions from traveling.

■ Khudoyarkhaon Palace, Kokand







# ECO Tourism Capitals

The ECO has a tradition of selecting the cities of the Member States which have a rich historical heritage and a great tourism potential as the ECO Tourism Capital for each year to facilitate sustainable development of tourism, local economies as well as improvement of welfare and level of lives of people in the host city and also for development of its tourism infrastructure.

This tradition was initiated and approved by the 3rd ECO Ministerial Meeting on Tourism, which was held in Khujand, Tajikistan in 2019.

The Meeting, after thorough deliberations on selection of the ECO Tourism Capital, approved city of Dushanbe in Tajikistan as the ECO Tourism Capital for the years 2020-2021 and also decided to approve cities of Sari and Ardabil in the Islamic Republic of Iran as the ECO Tourism Capitals for the years 2022 and 2023 respectively.



## Dushanbe ECO Tourism Capital 2020-2021

The "International Festival of Dushanbe as the ECO Tourism Capital" was held on August 29-30, 2021 in Dushanbe, the Republic of Tajikistan along with the "International Forum on Agro-Tourism Development" dedicated to the development of agro tourism in the region.

Dushanbe is one of the tourist cities for regional and world tourists, managing to preserve all its ancient historical and cultural monuments along with the development and construction of modern buildings. It has attracted the attention of many tourists with its history, nature and heritage. Attracting foreign investment in the construction of five-star hotels, medical institutions, parks of culture and leisure, construction of modern residential and commercial buildings, tea-houses decorated with national motifs, magnificent palaces built in a modern way, libraries and museums that are considered to be unique in Central Asia are one of the priorities for tourism development in Dushanbe.

The construction of citywide cultural and recreational parks, multi-storey residential and commercial buildings, Aqua Park com-



plex, sports buildings and dozens of modern cultural and social facilities, which is currently going on with high speed and modern urban planning style in Dushanbe, will primarily contribute to the development of domestic tourism.

The city of Dushanbe, as the main gateway for tourists and hundreds of thousands of foreign visitors, annually turns its venues into a place of rest and relaxation for tourists heading to the beautiful landscapes of Badakhshan, Khatlon, Zarafshan, Romit and Varzob.

Undoubtedly, the tourist attractions of Dushanbe, despite the small size of the city,



Rudaki Monument



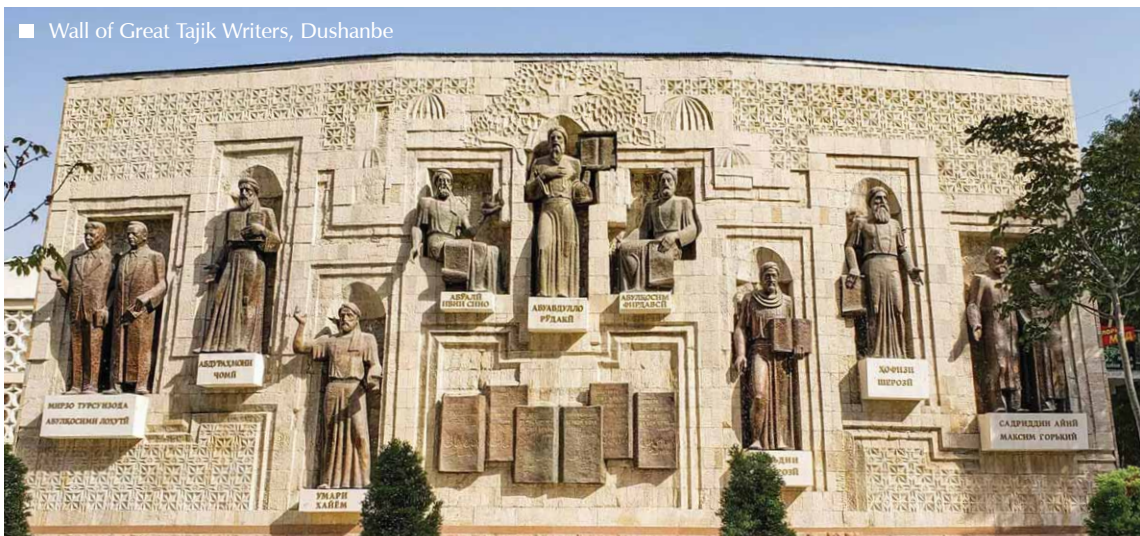


■ Dushanbe

is very abundant and there is no any place free from beautiful sights. Culture and traditions of hospitality, beautiful national costumes and museums, markets and monuments of the world-known Tajik and Persian writers and notable men, green gardens and trees, National, European and Oriental restaurants, shrines and places of culture and medicine, a beautiful nature and fresh air are just some of the attractions of Dushanbe.

The highest flagpole in the world of 165 meters high was erected in Dushanbe and recorded in the Guinness Book of Records, and today it has become one of the recre-

ation and tourist site for residents and guests of the capital of Tajikistan. According to statistics, currently there is an international airport, a railway station, a transport station, 37 hotels and 57 restaurants, 4 national tea-houses, 32 entertainment centers, 25 markets and 91 shopping centers, 26 souvenir stores, 17 leisure parks and 1 zoo, 14 alleys, 5 swimming and recreation lakes, 204 beauty salons and 201 barbershops, 4 cultural centers and 7 professional theaters, 10 museums and 6 libraries, 6 amphitheatres, 23 ancient, monumental and architectural monuments, 109 travel companies, fountains in 37 areas of the capital, 1 tennis



■ Wall of Great Tajik Writers, Dushanbe



court and a water sports complex, "Navruz", "Borbad", "Vahdat" and "Surush" palaces and 306 health facilities, which provide services to hundreds of domestic and foreign guests every day.

---

## Sari ECO Tourism Capital 2022

---

Events related to proclamation of Sari as the ECO tourism capital were held on May 10-11, 2022 in Sari, Mazandaran province of Iran. During the event, the ways and means to develop and expand the ECO cooperation in tourism industry, especially in the post-COVID scenario, were explored.

Sari is the biggest and the most populous city in Mazandaran province, one of the most significant cities in the northern region of Iran where there are in religious and historical places, various natural attractions as mountain, forest, plains and sea ports addition to vicinity to the margin of Damghan as a desert attraction which turned it into one of the attractive zones in Iran. The economy of this city depends on agriculture and food-stuff based on its natural situation so that it has the highest level of producing the sea products such as Caviar among all regions of



Iran and neighboring countries, with the best quality in all around the world. Tourism industry, factories and companies such as Mazandaran wood and paper industries as the biggest paper producer in Middle East, wooden handicrafts and pottery industries are also highly important here. People who live in Sari speak in Mazandarani and Farsi. Fazeli Mansion, Kolbadi historical house (museum), Miankaleh peninsula, Dasht e Naz Wildlife Refuge, Badab Soort, Shah Abbasi Grand Mosque, Churat Lake, Time Square, Shahid Rajaei Dam, Melal Park (Nations Park), Alandan Lake, the Resket Tower, Tourism Train, Hamam Waziri,



■ Veresk Bridge





■ Churat Lake

Khazarabad Beach, Tajan River, Dodange and Chahardange Wildlife Refuge are the most popular tourist attractions in this province.

#### ■ Dasht e Naz Wildlife Refuge

Sari is one of the most touristy cities in Iran that has a lot of tourists every season of the year. One of the spectacular surrounding attractions of this city is Dasht-e Naz Wildlife Refuge. Dasht-e Naz Wildlife Refuge is 56 hectares and also include about 447 species of plants. The most important plant species that grow in Dasht-e Naz Wildlife Refuge are hornbeam, beech, alder, parrotia, and gleditsia. The most significant

animal species in the area are Persian fallow deer, red deer, roe deer, jungle cat, and Ring-necked pheasant. You should know that Dasht-e Naz Wildlife Refuge is selected for breeding Persian fallow deer. The fence is also stretched around this wildlife refuge. It is possible to observe animals closely in this wildlife refuge.

#### ■ Churat Lake

Churat Lake in Mazandaran Province is located in Chahardangeh in Sari County. The lake was created as a result of an earthquake in 1941 and landslide followed by the spring water being closed beside the lake. The lake is about 2.5 hectares. Being close to Churat



■ Dasht Naz



Village, the lake is called Churat Lake. The reason that has made the lake special is not only nature around. It has another reason; how it was created. In the past, here was a river that because of earthquake it was blocked and as a result, the lake was created. When the level of water goes down, you can see trunks of trees which existed before.

#### ■ North-Tehran Tourist Train (Savadkoh or Three Golden Lines)

Ride the train deep into the forest. A different experience by watching nature and riding a train at the same time makes them even more enjoyable. North-Tehran Tourist Train (Savadkoh or Three Golden Lines) offers you this experience for one day.

The 370 km route of Tehran-North railway starts from Garmsar and continues to Golgah. It has been operating since 1937 and is considered one of the oldest railway networks in the country. This has made it a part of the railway history of Iran. The masterpiece of structural engineering can be seen in the extremely beautiful bridges of Veresk and Kalantari.

In a part of this meandering route of the northern tourist train, the railway track like a snake twists three times around the mountain to be on its main and level track. Local people called it the three golden lines, which is located between Gaduk station and Veresk.

## Ardebil ECO Tourism Capital 2023

Sprawling on a high, windswept plateau, Ardebil, the ECO Tourism Capital for 2023 is well-known for having abundant natural beauty, hospitable people, and its silk and carpet trade tradition. The hot spring and spa complexes of Sarein town, 40 kilometers southwest of Ardebil, are recreation attractions near Ardebil.

Also this city is well known as the first city with the potable water piping. Most of the people who live in this city are occupied with agriculture and animal husbandry and the nomads in this area have a specific and important role in dairy and handicraft production. The handicrafts of this city include Gilim, Jajim, Shawl, Verny, Masnad, Pottery, Leather, rug and some kinds of local sweets. The minimal ethnic diversity lives in this city. In addition to Turkish people, Just 3 other nations such as Tat, Talesh and Kurd live in this area. Most of People speak Turkish in Azari dialect and they are Shia' Muslims.

#### ■ Sheik Safi Al-Din Ardebil's shrivs

The city is known for mysticism leader Sheikh Safi-ad-din Ardabili. His tomb locat-

■ Sheik Safi Al-Din Ardebil's shrivs







ed in Ardabil was registered on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2010. The complex includes various parts such as Chini Khaneh (house of porcelain), Jannat Sara, Khanqaha, Chelleh Khaneh, Shahidgah, Cheragh Khaneh (Lighthouse) and Haram Khaneh.

#### ■ The Tomb of Shikh Jebraeil

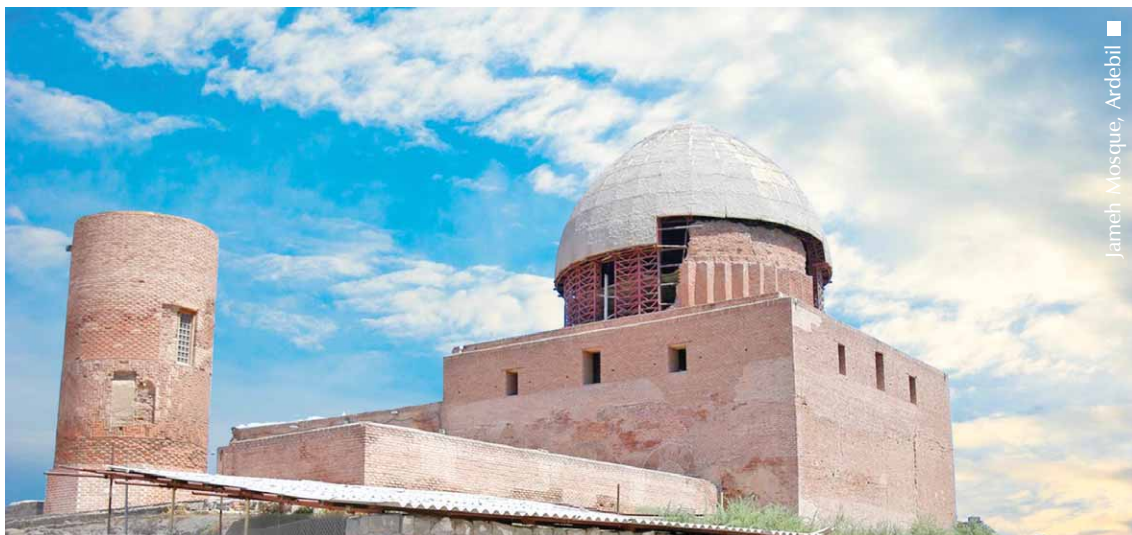
The tomb of Sheikh Jabraeil (the ancestor of Esmaeil Safavid) in Kalkhoran Village, 3 km north of Ardabil. The monument of the shrine belongs to the early 15th century. Historians consider this shrine as a masterpiece of the Safavid period.

#### ■ Jameh Mosque

Jomeh Mosque - from the pre-Islamic period dating back to Saljugis' reign.

The Bazar Complex in Ardabil dating back to the Safavid period.

The Previous building of the mosque consisted of a parch, a courtyard and a magnificent arch, which was destroyed during the Mangol attack in 620 AH/ but was rebuilt about 30 years later. Today, although the main building of the mosque has been destroyed and only parts of it remain, it still has an interesting and stunning architecture.



Jameh Mosque, Ardebil ■



# BEST PART OF THE JOURNEY STOPOVER IN ISTANBUL

Turkish Airlines invites passengers to discover unique wonders of Istanbul with stopover accommodation service.

As the airline that connects more countries than any other, Turkish Airlines offers the opportunity of discovering world's connection center Istanbul and its unique wonders with stopover service for the passengers with lengthy transfer times.



For passengers with long stopover time in Istanbul, Turkish Airlines provides 1-night stay in a 4-star hotel for Economy Class and 2 nights stay in a 5-star hotel for Business Class. Passengers will also have the option of staying at contracted hotels with special prices starting from 49 USD.

Transfer passengers from 42 countries\* experienced the privilege of discovering Istanbul with stopover service so far. The scope of the service will be expanded with 15 new departure countries\*\* in 2022.



## TURKISH AIRLINES

Terms and conditions apply, visit [turkishairlines.com](http://turkishairlines.com)

**\*42 countries (departure point):** Algeria, Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Canada, China, Denmark, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, Ghana, Greece, Ireland, India, Iran, Italy, Ivory Coast, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Russia, Scotland, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, Thailand, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and United States of America.

**\*\*Planned 15 countries (departure point):** Kenya, Zambia, Mozambique, Indonesia, South Korea, Vietnam, Bangladesh, Nepal, Argentina, Brazil, Panama, Colombia, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain.



# WE'RE ALL CONNECTED: ISTANBUL

Connecting more countries than any other.



**TURKISH AIRLINES**

**TÜRKİYE**

STAR ALLIANCE  